VOL 1: HUNT FOR THE DIRE BEAST

LONDON - CAMELO - TEKINO - ZAPATA

BATTLECATS®

MAD CAVE

VOLUME ONE: HUNT FOR THE DIRE BEAST

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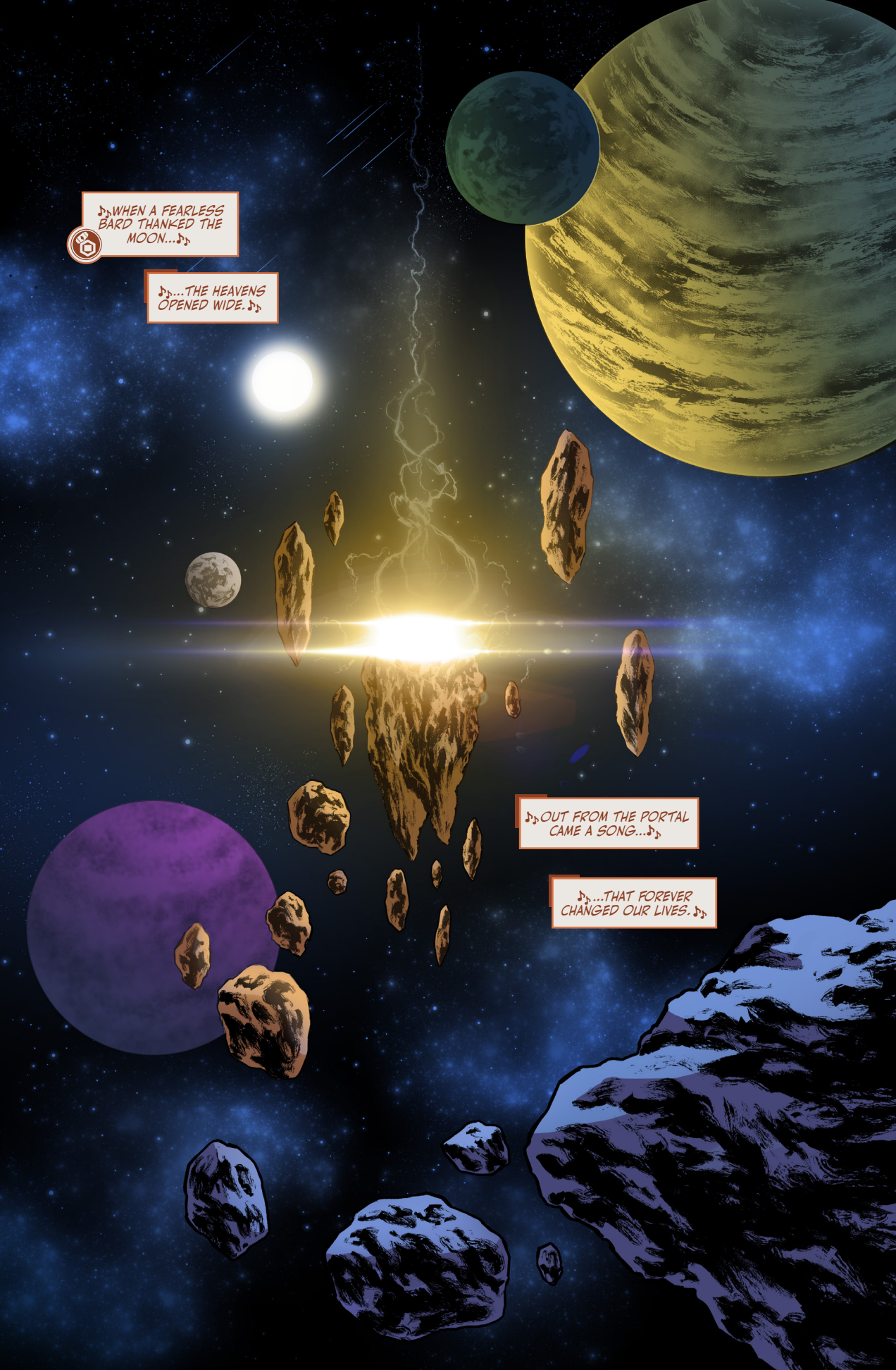
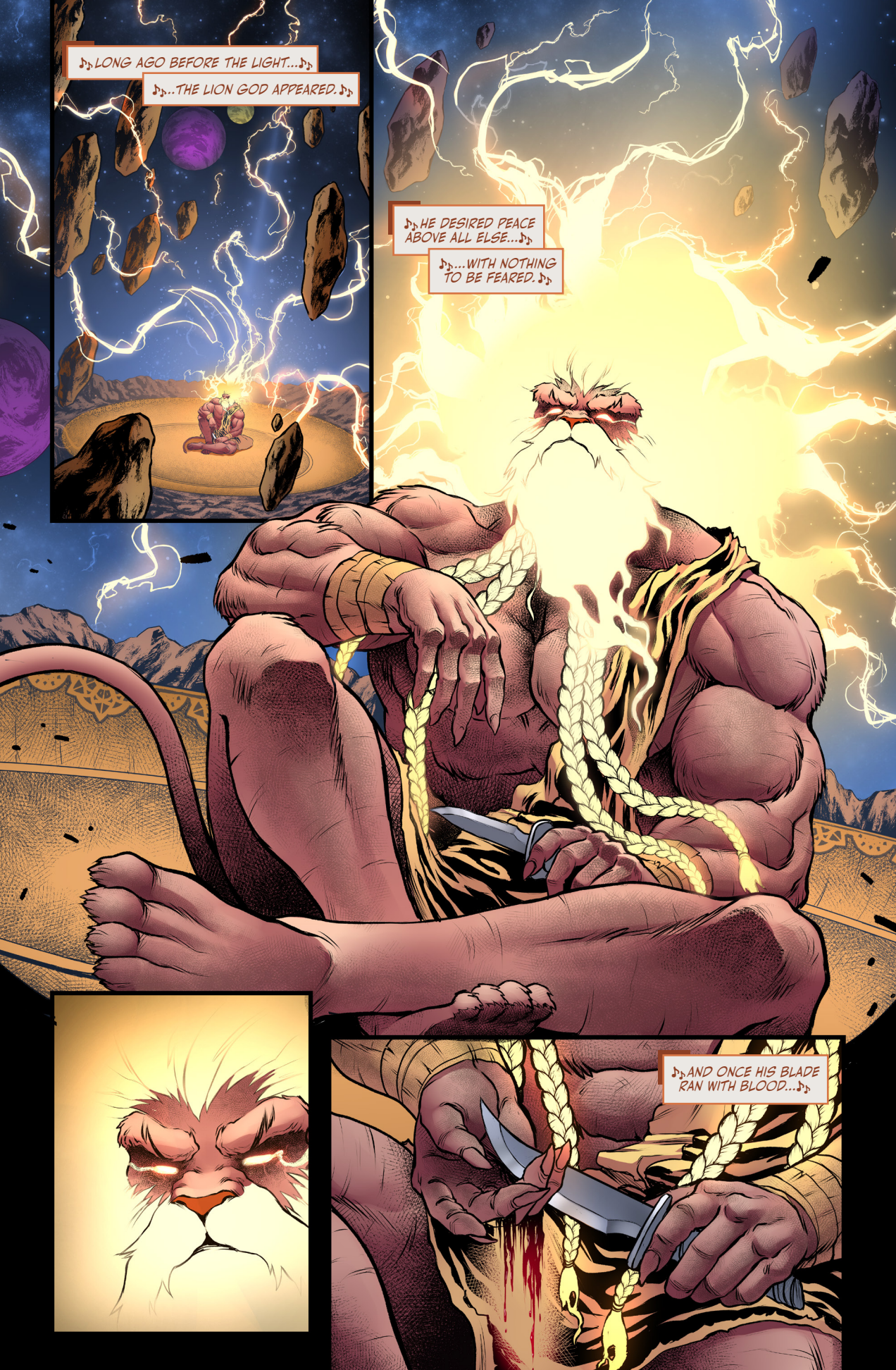
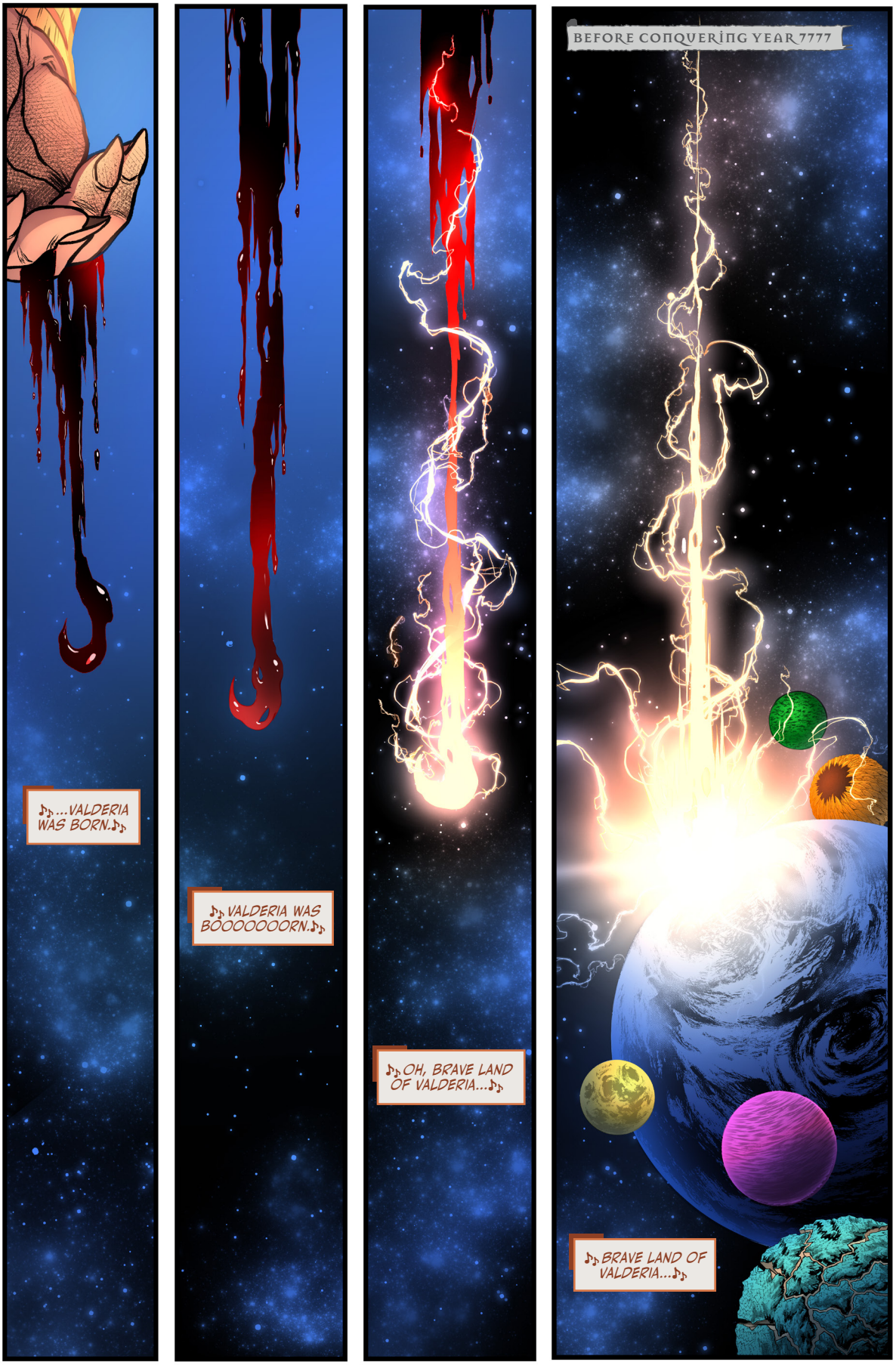
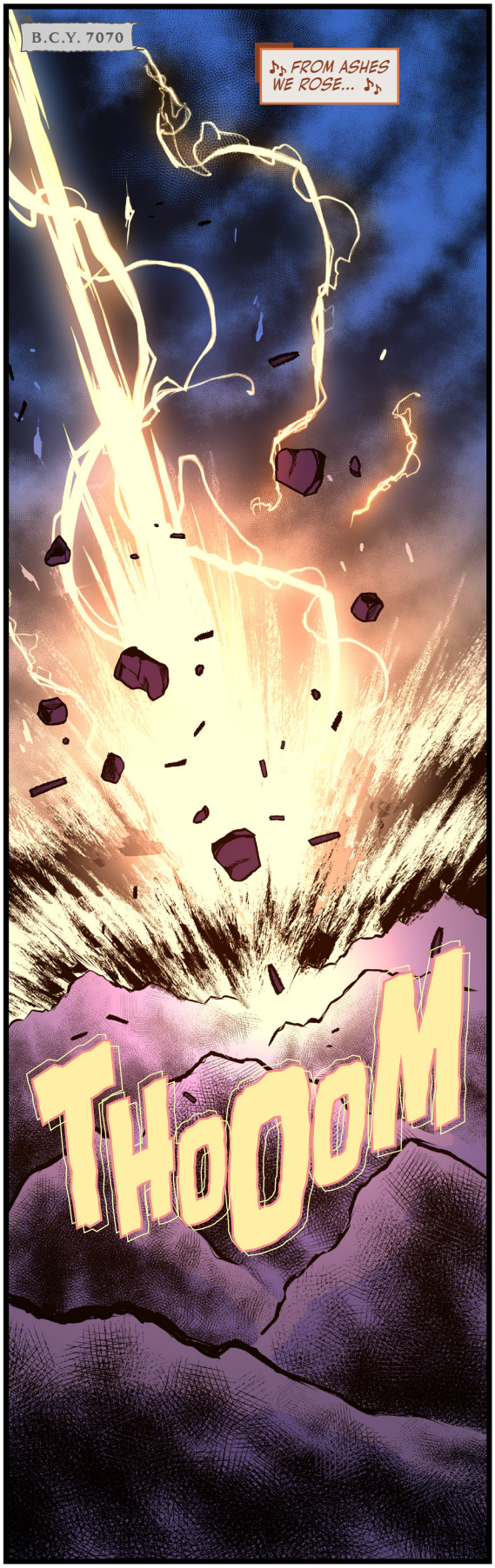
HIDDEN THREAT

Chapter One


♪♪WHEN A FEARLESS BARD THANKED THE MOON...♪♪
♪♪...THE HEAVENS OPENED WIDE.♪♪
♪♪OUT FROM THE PORTAL CAME A SONG...♪♪
♪♪...THAT FOREVER CHANGED OUR LIVES.♪♪


♪♪LONG AGO BEFORE THE LIGHT...♪♪
♪♪...THE LION GOD APPEARED.♪♪
♪♪HE DESIRED PEACE ABOVE ALL ELSE...♪♪
♪♪....WITH NOTHING TO BE FEARED.♪♪
♪♪AND ONCE HIS BLADE RAN WITH BLOOD...♪♪


♪♪...VALDERIA WAS BORN.♪♪
♪♪ VALDERIA WAS BOOOOOOORN.♪♪
♪♪OH, BRAVE LAND OF VALDERIA...♪♪
BEFORE CONQUERING YEAR 7777
♪♪ BRAVE LAND OF VALDERIA...♪♪


B.C.Y. 7070
♪♪ FROM ASHES WE ROSE... ♪♪
THOOOM

B.C.Y. 4092
♪♪...YET NEVER IN VAIN... ♪♪

B.C.Y. 3200
♪♪...THE FELINES CHOSE THEIR PATHS.♪♪

B.C.Y. 2700
♪♪FROM CHAOS TO ORDER...♪♪
♪♪...AND WAR TO PEACE...♪♪
♪♪...T'WAS A RIGHTEOUS PATH INDEED.♪♪

The dark forest near the outskirts of La Marque.
C.Y. 550. Now.
♪♪ A kingdom of balance and noble creeds... ♪♪
♪♪ ...Valderia was booooooorn. ♪♪
♪♪Oh, brave land of Valderia...♪♪
♪♪..brave land of Valderia...♪♪
That was lovely, Mekkar.
Mmmm, yes. I enjoyed it immensely.
Thanks. It's one of my favorites.
That and the one about the greatest battlecat who ever lived.
Maybe that will be the first song I play when I get home to Blackstone.

WITH EVERYTHING THAT'S GONE WRONG THESE PAST MONTHS, WHO KNOWS WHEN THAT WILL BE.
BESIDES, THIS BEAST WE ARE HUNTING HAS BROUGHT HORROR TO STORMHOLT FOR MANY MOONS.
THIS IS NOT GOING TO BE EASY.
IF THIS THING IS SO DANGEROUS, THEN WHY DIDN'T THE KING SEND US SOONER?
EY, KALEERA? WHAT'D YOU THINK?

WHAT I THINK IS IRRELEVANT.
KING ERAMAD III GAVE US AN ORDER, AND THAT'S THAT.
WHY DON'T YOU COME JOIN US?
YOU PROBABLY CAN'T SEE A THING OUT THERE ANYWAY.
NO. NOT AS MUCH AS I'D LIKE.
THERE IS SOMETHING WRONG WITH THIS PLACE.
THE FOUL MAGIC OF LA MARQUE IS PLAYING TRICKS ON OUR SENSES. WE HAVE TO BE CAREFUL.
SHE SEEMS TO BE DOING BETTER.
MMMM. DOES SHE?
HELLO. I'M RIGHT HERE.
AND HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO TELL YOU TO FORGET ABOUT IT?
I'M FINE.
MAYBE, BUT THE REST OF US AREN'T OKAY AFTER WHAT HAPPENED AT THE SKELETON MAZE.
IF VALADAR COMES AFTER ME AGAIN, I'LL BE READY.
I KNOW YOU WILL, BUT WE CAN ALL USE A LITTLE EXTRA MUSCLE ONCE IN A WHILE.
MEKKAR.

SHE SAID SHE'S FINE.

AFTER WHAT SHE WENT THROUGH?
AFTER WHAT WE ALL WENT THROUGH?
YOUR CONCERN IS NOTED AND APPRECIATED.
FIND ANYTHING OUT THERE?
NO ONE IS FOLLOWING US, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE ASKING. BUT SOMETHING IS NOT RIGHT HERE...
NATHARIEN WARNED US ABOUT THIS PLACE...
YES, I SENSED IT TOO.
WE MUST BE GETTING CLOSE.
STRANGE MYTHS ARE SPOKEN ABOUT LA MARQUE.
THEY SAY ITS MAGIC IS WHAT ACTUALLY BIRTHED THE BEAST WE HAVE BEEN ORDERED TO SLAY.

WE'LL FIND OUR ANSWERS SOON ENOUGH.
FOR NOW, WE SHOULD REST.
I'LL TAKE THE FIRST WATCH.
NO, NO, NO.
YOU HAVEN'T SAT DOWN SINCE WE GOT HERE. ALLOW ME.
OUR FEARLESS LEADER NEEDS PROPER REST.
I INSIST!
VERY WELL, MEKKAR.
COME FIND ME WHEN YOU NEED A BREAK.
OF COURSE. ENJOY YOUR NAP.

-:yAAAAWN:-
TSSSS

AH, THAT'S GOOD.
KRAK

EVERYONE! GET UP!
WE GOT COMPANY!
PREPARE FOR BATTLE.
DON'T HARM THE MAGIC WIELDER--
WE NEED HER ALIVE.
KILL THE OTHERS.

UMBRA RAIDERS.
THEY'RE OUT FOR BLOOD.
LIGHT THEM UP, VAELA.
GLADLY.
YAAAAARGH!
SHINK
YAAAAARGH!

KLUNGG
FTTT
FTTT
SHADOW!
CRAK
I DIDN'T EVEN BREAK A SWEAT.
DON'T CELEBRATE JUST YET. THIS ISN'T OVER.

RAARGH
PUPPETS
ERAMAD SCUM
FOR THE KING!
FTTT
FTTT
FTTT
SHINK

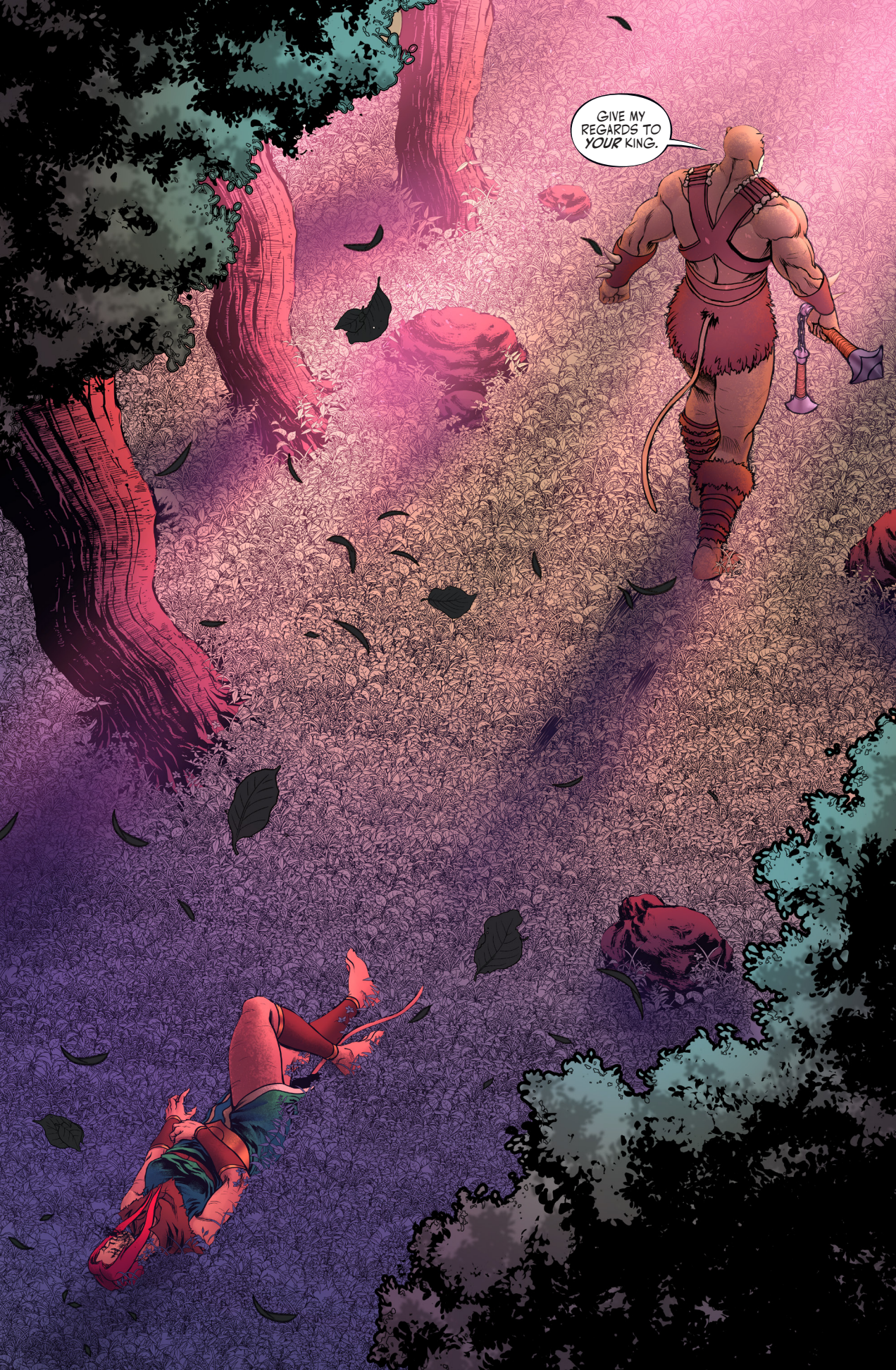
CLUNK
CRUNCH
WOOSH

THE BASTARDS SNUCK UPON US.
YES, BUT WHAT REALLY CONCERNS ME IS THAT THEY WERE AFTER VAELA.
I'M NOT GOING BACK TO THE SKELETON MAZE.
AND WE'RE NOT GOING TO LET THAT HAPPEN.
HMM. IT'S UNLIKELY UMBRA RAIDERS VENTURED THIS FAR ALONE.
HEY, WHERE DID KALEERA GO?

THUMP
I UNDERESTIMATED YOUR LITTLE TEAM.
I REMEMBER YOU, ELTOREQ... FROM THE WHITE MARSH ISLANDS.
YOU WERE A COWARD THEN AND YOU'RE A COWARD NOW.
A LOT HAS CHANGED.
CARE FOR A DEMONSTRATION?
IT WILL BE AN HONOR...BRINGING YOUR HEAD TO THE KING.
HOW AMUSING.
BUT THE MOONS DO NOT SEEM TO BE IN YOUR FAVOR.

THUK
THUK
THUK
THUK

=HUFF=
=HUFF=
=HUFF=
ACK--
=NGHHH=
CRAKK!!
ARRRGH!

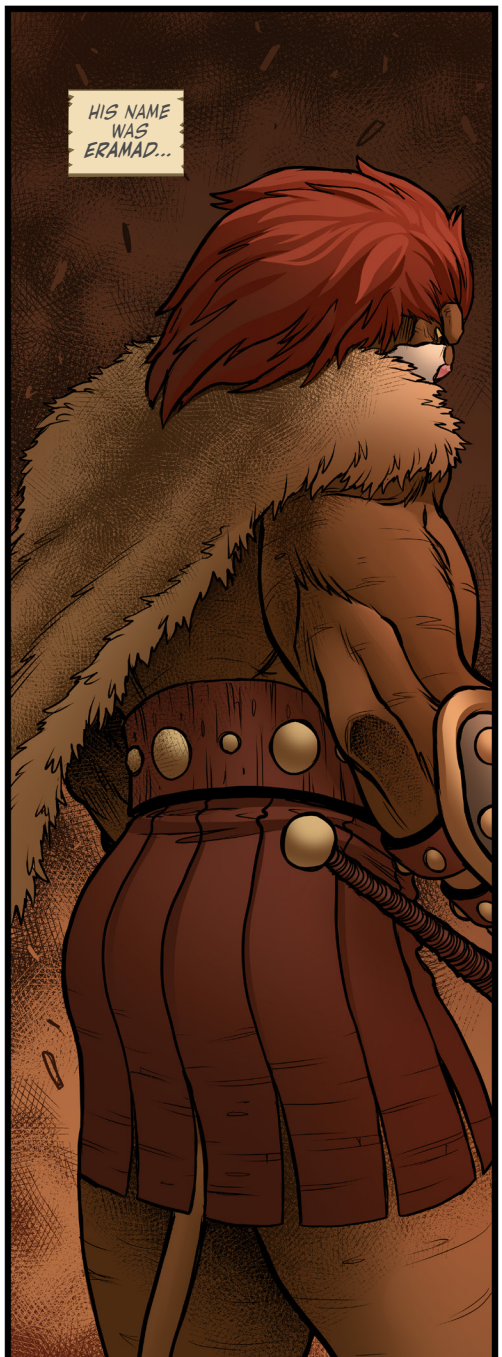

GIVE MY REGARDS TO *YOUR* KING.

LIONBORNE

Chapter Two

Stormholt
81 B.C.Y.
TIME PASSED IN VALDERIA, AND TRIBES FOUGHT ENDLESSLY TO CONQUER ONE ANOTHER.
WITHOUT MERCY, WITHOUT COMPASSION.

BUT THE COLD WINDS OF THE NORTH BROUGHT THE WARRIOR VALDERIA SO DESPERATELY NEEDED.


HIS NAME WAS ERAMAD...

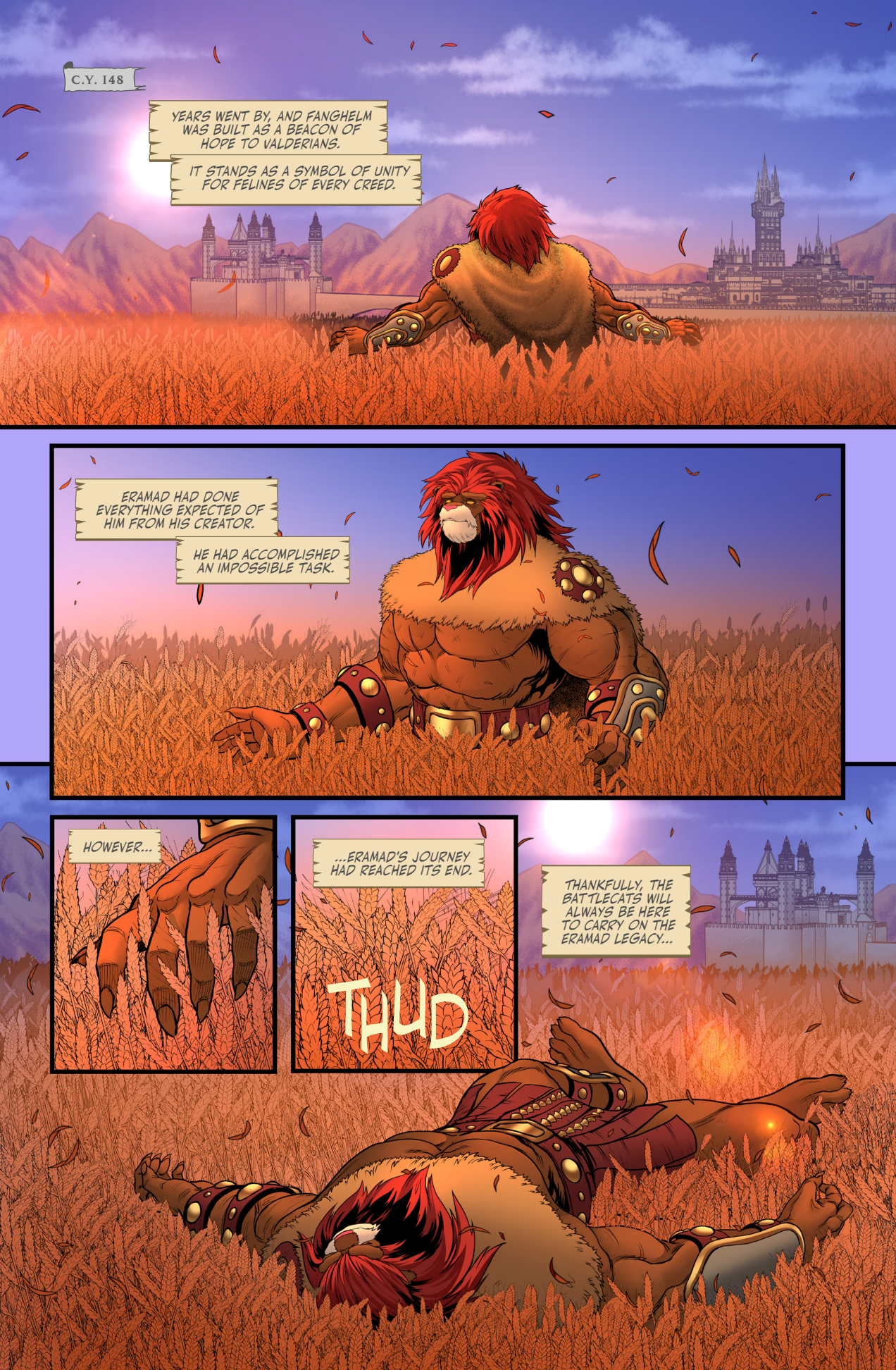
THE FIRST FELINE WITH A MANE.
STAND DOWN, OR DIE!
YOU CAN KILL US ALL, BUT OUR BELIEFS WILL LIVE ON FOREVER.
THE LIONBORNE THAT WOULD ACHIEVE MORE THAN ANY FELINE BEFORE HIM.
OOF
YARGHH
A KING DESTINED TO BRING ORDER ACROSS VALDERIA...

...BUT HE NEEDED GUIDANCE.
WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT DO YOU WANT?
ERAMAD, MY LIEGE...
RAUTAN...
MYRTHALEN...
AND I, NATHARIEN, HAVE COME FROM A DISTANT LAND TO DELIVER A MESSAGE.
YOU WILL UNIFY THESE LANDS BY THE MANDATES OF THE LION GOD.
REGIONS MUST BE ESTABLISHED REPRESENTING EACH OF THE MOONS AND THEIR WARRIORS.
THEY WILL PROVIDE BALANCE TO YOUR KINGDOM.
AND WITH THESE WORDS, THE UNIFICATION OF VALDERIA BEGAN...

Stormholt.
42 C.Y.
ERAMAD'S WORD BECAME LAW. HIS RESOLVE WON OVER MANY ACROSS THE LAND.
BUT VALDERIA WOULD SOON RETURN TO THE DARKNESS...
THE UMBRA RAIDERS, DESCENDANTS OF RULERS FROM CONQUERED LANDS, SOUGHT TO END HIS EMPIRE.
THEY DISAGREED WITH UNIFICATION IF IT MEANT RELINQUISHING THEIR INDEPENDENCE.
ERAMAD AND HIS ADVISORS EVENTUALLY ESCAPED THE RAIDS, AND AFTER MANY MOONS, ARRIVED AT THE GARDENS OF SOLITUDE.
IT WAS THERE THAT THE LION GOD WOULD GRANT HIM A GIFT...
...THE MARK OF THE FANG.
ERAMAD RETURNED TO BATTLE WIELDING THE STRENGTH OF A GOD.

HOWEVER, THE POWER WAS FAR TOO DANGEROUS, AND THE KING KNEW IT MUST BE RETURNED TO WHERE IT CAME FROM...
...BUT ERAMAD NEVER EXPECTED WHAT HAPPENED NEXT.
THE MARK OF THE FANG BURST INTO TINY FRAGMENTS THAT FOUND THEIR WAY INTO THE KING'S ADVISORS.
SAI. VALAN. VELRAV...
...YOU MUST NEVER FATHER ANY OFFSPRING.
THIS POWER IS TOO DANGEROUS, AND MUST DIE WITH US.

C.Y. 100
YEARS PASSED, AND BALANCE WAS RESTORED.
SIRE, I WILL TRAVEL THE LAND SEARCHING FOR FELINES WORTHY OF RAUTAN'S TUTELAGE.
RAUTAN, HAVE YOU FOUND A PLACE TO TRAIN POTENTIAL CANDIDATES?
IN THE WHITE MARSH ISLANDS, SOUTH OF ARKHOVIA.
THE CUBS WILL BE TESTED, AND ONLY THE STRONGEST FROM EACH REGION WILL BE CHOSEN.
LIKE THE FIVE MOONS AND THEIR WARRIORS, THESE HEROES WILL PROTECT THE CROWN AND THE FELINES OF VALDERIA FROM HARM.
THEY SHALL BE KNOWN AS THE BATTLECATS: HEROES OF VALDERIA.


C.Y. 148
YEARS WENT BY, AND FANGHELM WAS BUILT AS A BEACON OF HOPE TO VALDERIANS.
IT STANDS AS A SYMBOL OF UNITY FOR FELINES OF EVERY CREED.
ERAMAD HAD DONE EVERYTHING EXPECTED OF HIM FROM HIS CREATOR.
HE HAD ACCOMPLISHED AN IMPOSSIBLE TASK.
HOWEVER...
...ERAMAD'S JOURNEY HAD REACHED ITS END.
THUD
THANKFULLY, THE BATTLECATS WILL ALWAYS BE HERE TO CARRY ON THE ERAMAD LEGACY...

C.Y. NOW.
VAELA, DO SOMETHING!
STAND ASIDE, KELTHAN.
LUNO. GRANT ME THE POWER TO HEAL THIS VESSEL!
ALLOW MY ARKHOVIAN MAGIC TO FLOW INTO HER BODY AND SO--
ARGHHHHH!!
NGH!!

-:NGHH:-
WHAT WERE YOU THINKING?
HE COULD HAVE KILLED YOU.
-:COUGH:-
-:COUGH:-
-:COUGH:-
I WAS SURE I COULD'VE TAKEN HIM.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
BUT DID ANYONE ELSE SEE THAT RED MOON?
I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT.
WHAT WAS THAT?
IT WAS A BLOOD MOON--
A TERRIBLE OMEN.
OMEN OR NOT, NATHARIEN SHOULD HAVE THE ANSWER UPON OUR RETURN.
AGREED.
WE ARE NOT GOING TO FIGURE THIS OUT NOW.
WHAT ABOUT ELTOREQ?
ARE WE JUST GOING TO LET THAT SHITBAG GET AWAY WITH THIS?!
FOR NOW. WE HAVE OUR ORDERS.
BUT, KELTHAN--
LET'S MOVE!!

THE BLOOD CANYONS.
TAKE CARE OF MY MOUNT.
SHE NEEDS WATER.
AND IF SOMETHING HAPPENS TO HER...
...I'LL HAVE YOUR HEAD ON A SPIKE.
SIRE, I BRING GREAT NEWS. I HAVE WEAKENED THE BATTLECATS.
WHAT ABOUT VAELA?
SHE REMAINED WITH THE OTHERS.
IF I'D-
YOU'RE PATHETIC, ELTOREQ.

ONCE AN IMBECILE, ALWAYS AN IMBECILE.
I CAN GO BACK.
I CAN FINISH WHAT I STARTED.
ALL I NEED ARE SKILLED WARRIORS.
NOT THE UMBRA TRASH WE HAVE NOW.

IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT.
THE UMBRA ARMY IS ALMOST READY.
BESIDES, WE ONLY NEED VAELA, AND SHE HAS PROVEN TO BE MOST ELUSIVE.
SIRE, PLEASE, I CAN--
CRACK
DON'T EVER FAIL ME AGAIN.
NOW GO AND SUMMON THE DARKATS.
ERAMAD'S REIGN IS COMING TO AN END.

La marque.
WE ARE HERE.
THIS IS THE DOMAIN OF THE DIRE BEAST.
I HAVE SOMETHING.
WHAT IS IT?
THERE SEEMS TO BE A TRAIL.
BUT IT ENDS HERE.
THIS DOESN'T MAKE ANY SENSE.
LET'S BE CAUTIOUS.
STAY ALERT, AND DON'T BREAK FORMA--
CRUM
CRUM
CRUM
CRUM
CRUM

BATTLECATS!
PREPARE TO FIGHT!

NNGHHH!!
KSHHH
ARGGHHH!!
SLASH

EVERYONE ALL RIGHT?
NEVER BEEN BETTER!
FOR THE KING!
HMM... THAT'S ODD.
THESE THINGS LOOK LIKE THEY'RE ALIVE...
KRAK
KRAK
KRAK
BE CAREFUL. WE DON'T--
GRRRR...

SMASH
GRRRR...
THUNK
THUNK
THUNK
VAELA, YOU'RE UP.
WAY AHEAD OF YOU.
SHADOW!

BOOM
SLASH
SLKT
CLUNK
OOF!
SMASH

KALEERA!! CATCH!!

THHRRT

THUNK

SLASH

SLIKT

CRUNCH

SLASH
BOOP
KABOOM!

ALL RIGHT.
MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.
CAN WE EAT NOW?
NOT YET, SHORT STUFF.

WHAT ELSE DO YOU THINK IS OUT THERE?
HOPEFULLY, SOMETHING I CAN CHEW.
WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND, BIG GUY?

THE WIND JUST CHANGED.

KELTHAN... THE BEAST IS HIDING IN THOSE HILLS.

WE ARE IN FOR A FIGHT LIKE WE'VE NEVER SEEN BEFORE...

"...I JUST PRAY TO TEGEI THAT WE ARE READY."
GRRR...

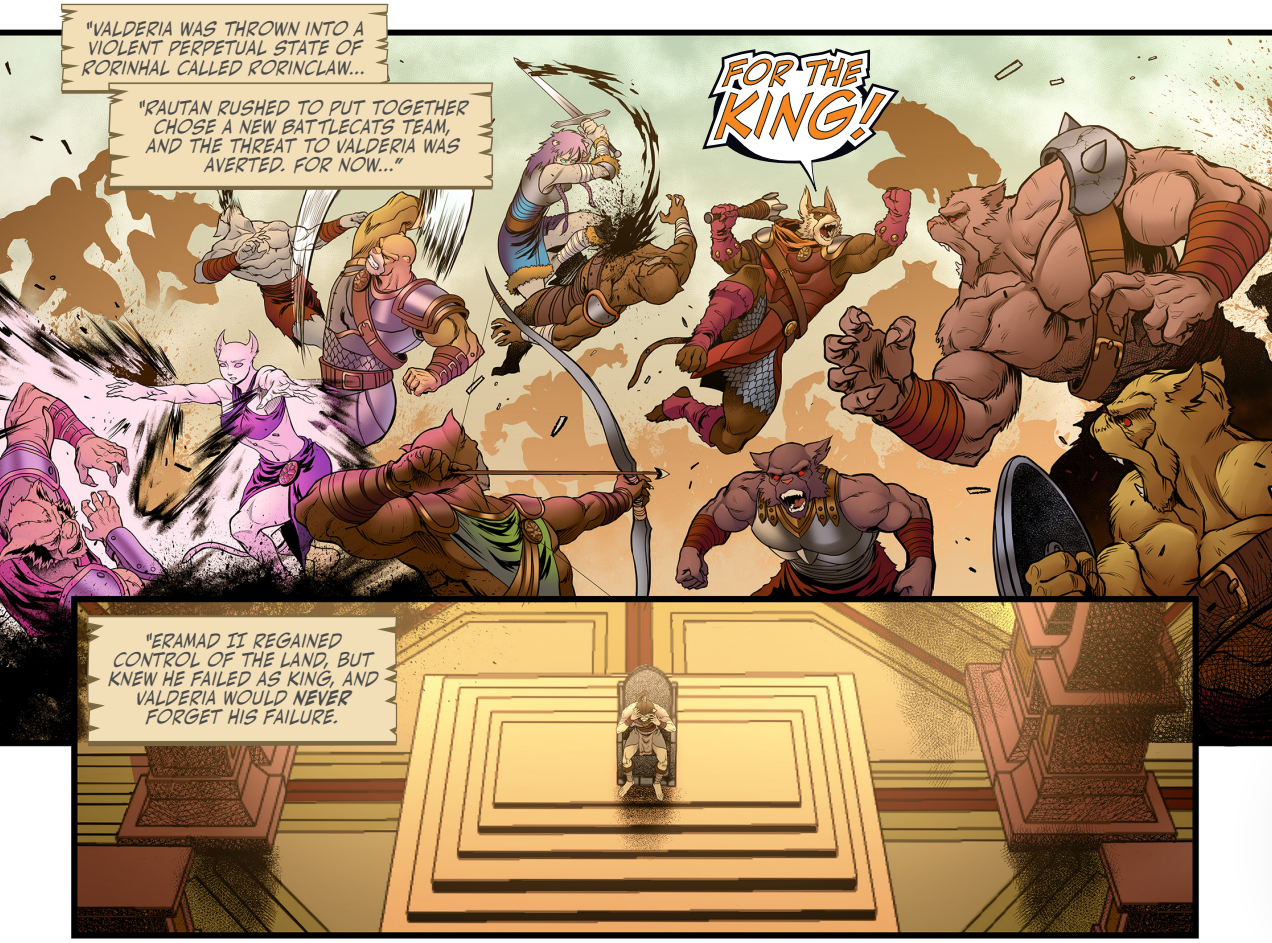
MARK OF THE FANG

Chapter Three

Fanghelm, the Pridelands.
149 C.Y.
"Eramad I, had served like no other feline in Valderian history. Alas, death was inevitable, even for a king.
"However, there must always be a Lionborne..."
WAAAAA!
"That year saw the BIRTH of the successor to the Eramad LINEAGE."
LONG LIVE THE KING!
LONG LIVE ERAMAD II!

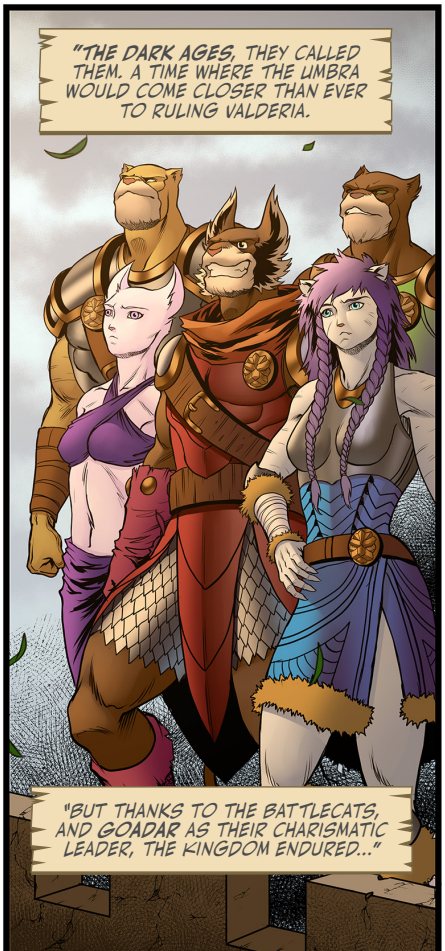
"OVER THE YEARS, ERAMAD II GREW UP TO BE A VERY DIFFERENT KING FROM HIS PREDECESSOR.
"A FELINE WHOSE VISION FOR VALDERIA WAS A LITTLE MORE...GRANDIOSE..."
IT IS TIME WE ACHIEVED A MEASURE OF BEAUTY FAR BEYOND ANYTHING ERAMAD THE FIRST COULD HAVE POSSIBLY IMAGINED...
WHY AREN'T THERE MORE STATUES IN THE--
SIRE, THE FIRE FIEND HAS REACHED THE CITY WALLS.
FELINES ARE REVOLTING IN EVERY REGION.
"...YET HE IGNORED THE THREATS TO VALDERIA."
WHY MUST YOU BOTHER ME WITH SUCH TRIVIAL MATTERS?
THAT'S WHAT THE BATTLECATS ARE FOR.

BARDEON, BLACKSTONE.
RAWR!
CRACK
"THEIR LAST HOPE WAS LOST."
YOU JUDGEMENT HAS BEEN CLOUDED, SIRE.
THIS WAS NOT YOUR ERAMAD I'S VISION FOR VALDERIA.
HOW DARE YOU?!
I'VE TAKEN THIS KINGDOM FURTHER THAN HE EVER DREAMED!
AND NEVER FORGET TO WHOM YOU SPEAK, NATHARIEN!
I AM THE SON OF A GOD!


"VALDERIA WAS THROWN INTO A VIOLENT PERPETUAL STATE OF RORINHAL CALLED RORINCLAW...
"RAUTAN RUSHED TO PUT TOGETHER CHOSE A NEW BATTLECATS TEAM, AND THE THREAT TO VALDERIA WAS AVERTED. FOR NOW..."
FOR THE KING!
"ERAMAD II REGAINED CONTROL OF THE LAND, BUT KNEW HE FAILED AS KING, AND VALDERIA WOULD NEVER FORGET HIS FAILURE.

"THE KING KNEW HE MUST PAY FOR HIS CARELESSNESS...
"...BUT WHAT PUNISHMENT IS FIT FOR A KING?

"EXILE.
"VALDERIA FACED MANY YEARS WITHOUT A LIONBORNE. WITHOUT A KING.


"THE DARK AGES, THEY CALLED THEM. A TIME WHERE THE UMBRA WOULD COME CLOSER THAN EVER TO RULING VALDERIA.
"BUT THANKS TO THE BATTLECATS, AND GOADAR AS THEIR CHARISMATIC LEADER, THE KINGDOM ENDURED..."

NOW.
"...AGAINST THE EVIL ALWAYS LURKING IN VALDERIA."
I MISS YOU. LIFE IS NOT THE SAME WITHOUT YOU.
EVERYTHING IS COMING TOGETHER AS EXPECTED.
SOON, ERAMAD WILL BE ON HIS KNEES, BEGGING FOR HIS LIFE.
HE'LL BLEED FOR WHAT HE DID TO YOU.
VALADAR, THE REST OF THE DARKATS HAVE ARRIVED.
I'LL BE RIGHT THERE.

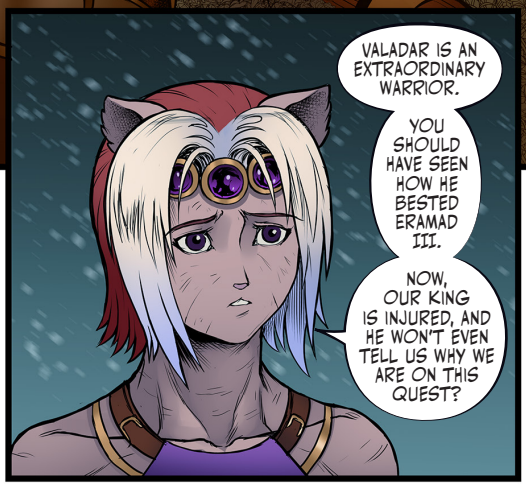
THE TIME HAS COME, DARKATS.
TOGETHER, WE WILL SHOW VALDERIA WHERE ITS TRUE PATH LIES.
IF WE MOVE QUICKLY...

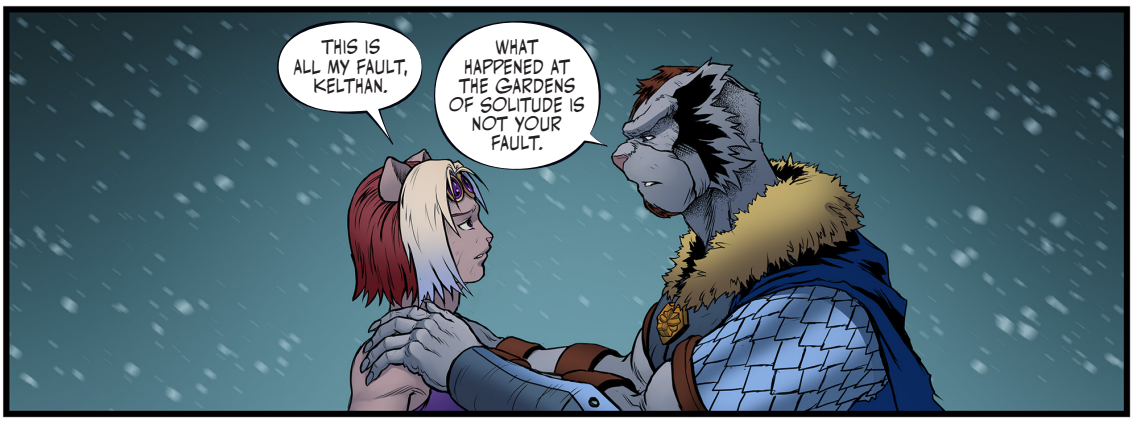
La marque, now.
"...they won't know what hit them."
This chamber is a nest of evil like no other across Valderia.
On this day, THE MARK OF THE FANG shall be made whole!

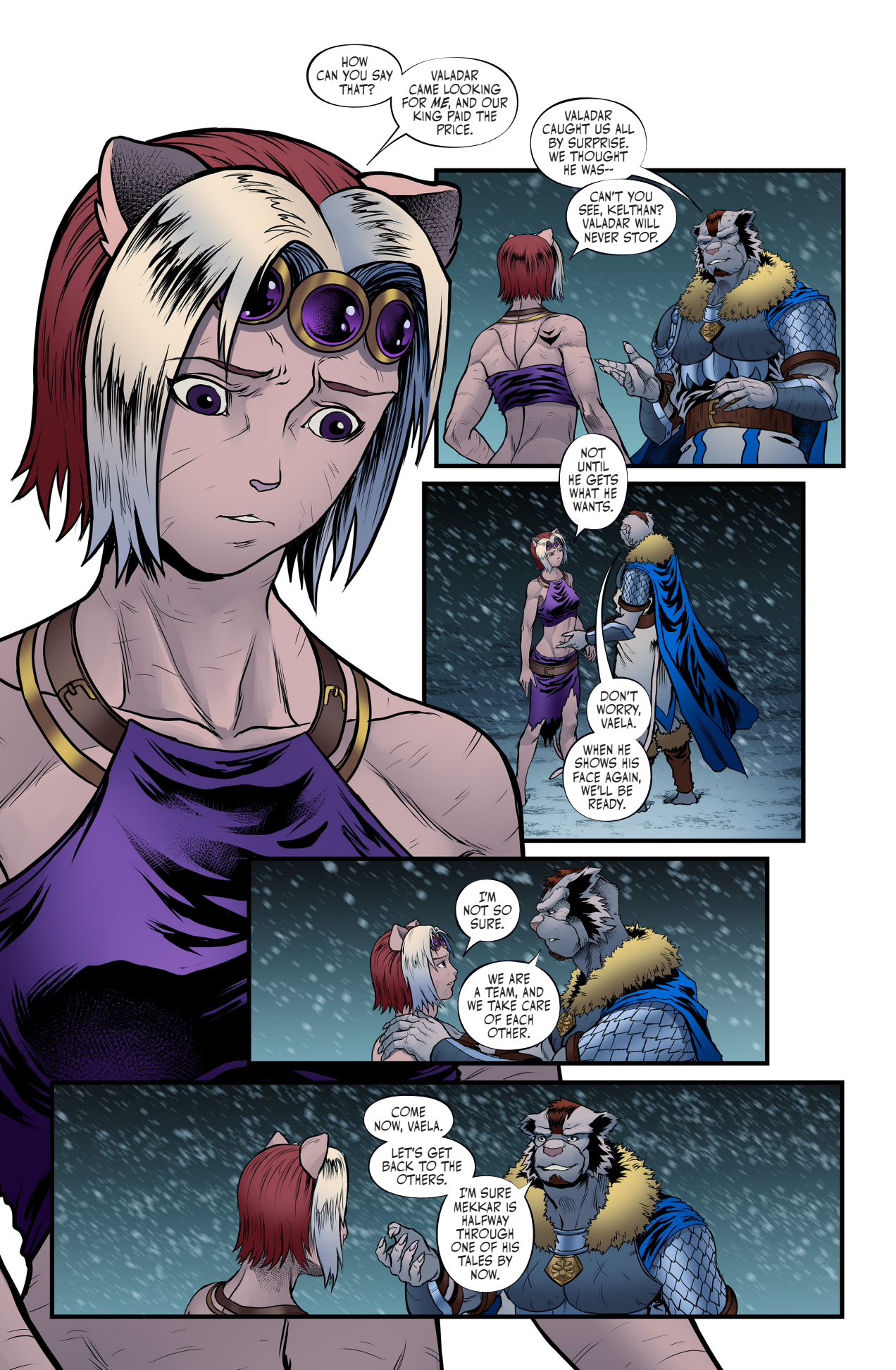
TALK TO ME, VAELA.
WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU?
IT'S THE MARK.
IT WAS MEANT TO DIE WITH ERAMAD I...NOW, I'M CURSED.
THE MARK OF THE FANG IS NOT A CURSE.
YOU WERE CHOSEN, AND I COULDN'T THINK OF ANYONE BETTER TO CARRY IT.
WE ARE ALL JUST PLAYING OUR PART IN THE GRAND SCHEME OF THINGS.
AND WHAT PART DO I PLAY BESIDES DESTROYER OF VALDERIA?
"BECAUSE THAT'S ALL THIS POWER IS GOOD FOR.
"THAT'S THE ONLY REASON VALADAR IS LOOKING FOR ME."

"HOW COULD MY ANCESTORS BE SO CARELESS?

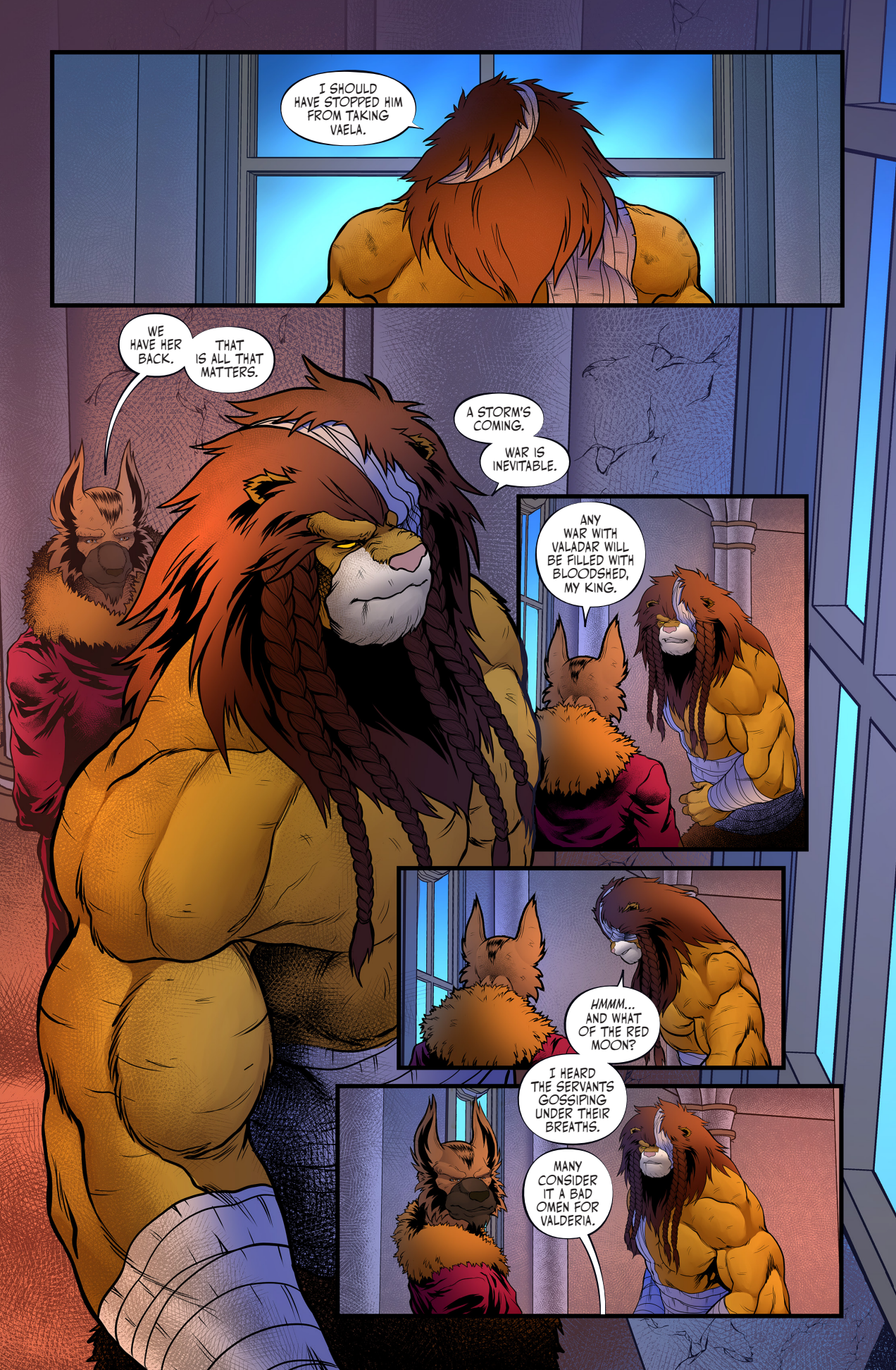
"WHY DID THEY BREAK THE OATH?"





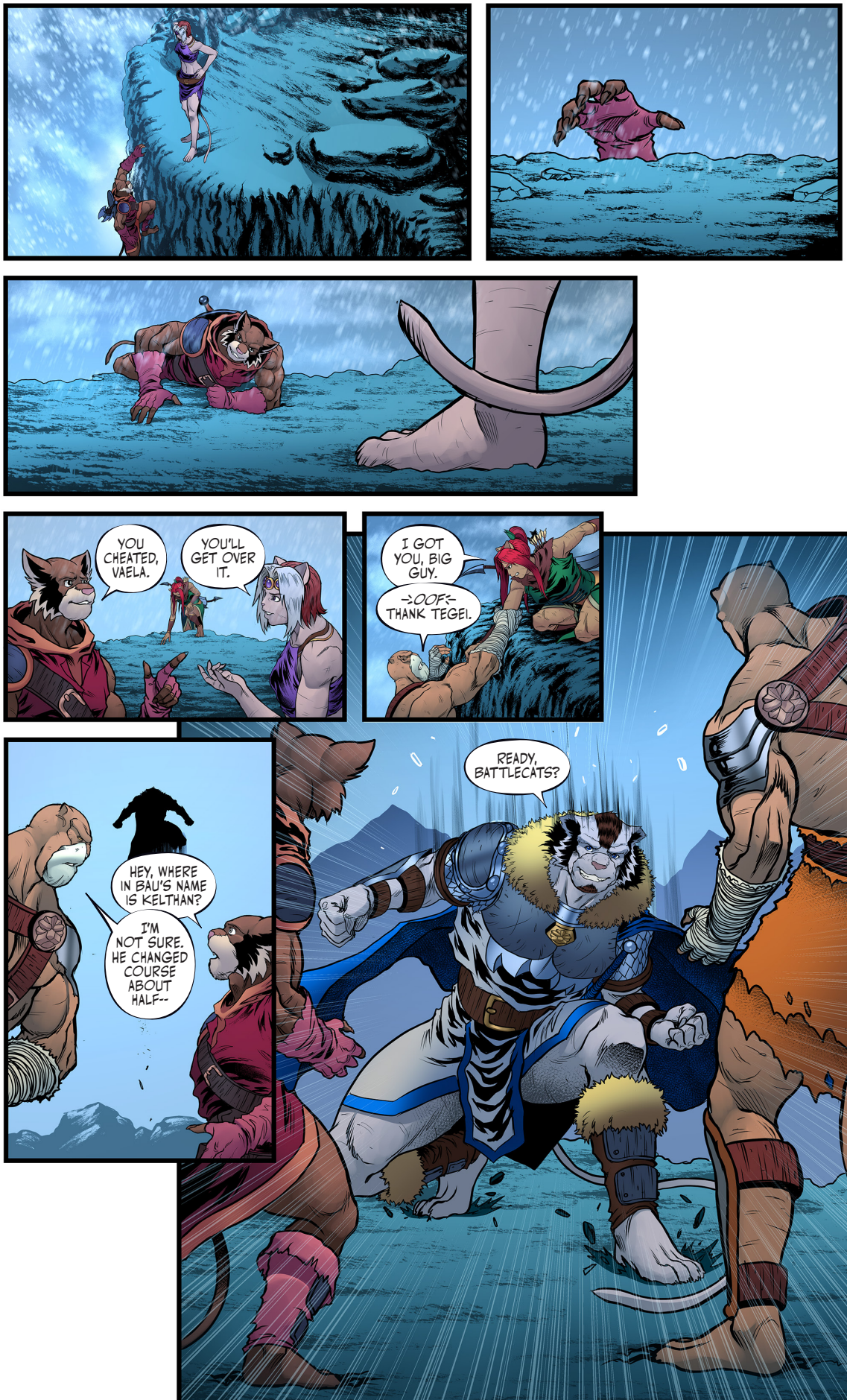

HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?
VALADAR CAME LOOKING FOR ME, AND OUR KING PAID THE PRICE.
VALADAR CAUGHT US ALL BY SURPRISE. WE THOUGHT HE WAS--
CAN'T YOU SEE, KELTHAN? VALADAR WILL NEVER STOP.
NOT UNTIL HE GETS WHAT HE WANTS.
DON'T WORRY, VAELA.
WHEN HE SHOWS HIS FACE AGAIN, WE'LL BE READY.
I'M NOT SO SURE.
WE ARE A TEAM, AND WE TAKE CARE OF EACH OTHER.
COME NOW, VAELA.
LET'S GET BACK TO THE OTHERS.
I'M SURE MEKKAR IS HALFWAY THROUGH ONE OF HIS TALES BY NOW.

Stormholt City, Stormholt.
NATHARIEN!
...FEVER HIGH ENOUGH TO KILL AN AVERAGE CAT.
DRINK THIS, MY KING.
MADE FROM THE HEALING HERBS OF ARKHOVIA...
NOTHING A GOOD BALM WON'T--
OR WOULD YOU PREFER SOME MEAD FROM YOUR CELLAR?
YES, MY LIEGE?
NATHARIEN!
HEALERS, LEAVE US AT ONCE.
OFF! GET OFF ME!
WHAT TROUBLES YOU, SIRE?

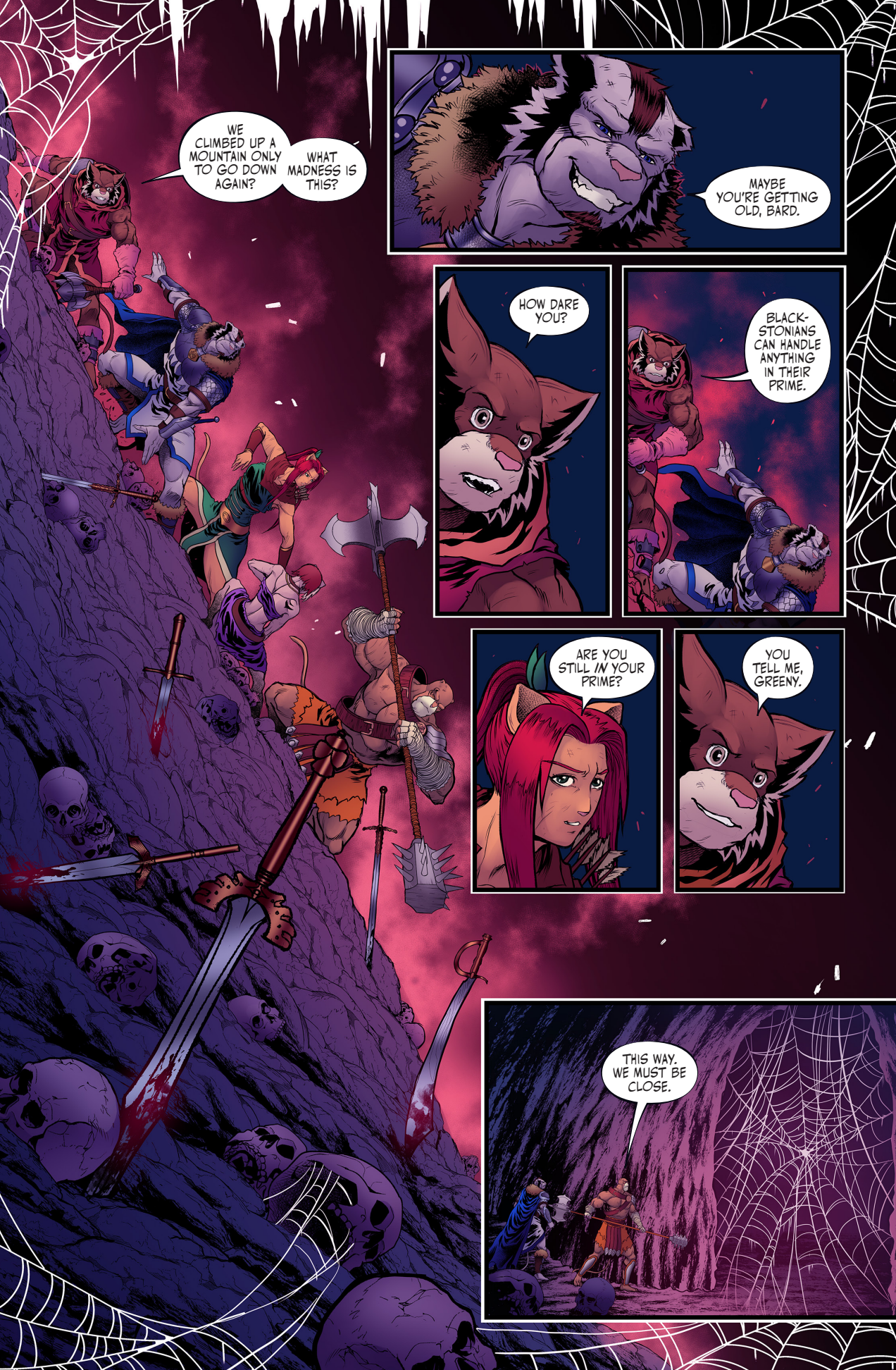

I SHOULD HAVE STOPPED HIM FROM TAKING VAELA.
WE HAVE HER BACK.
THAT IS ALL THAT MATTERS.
A STORM'S COMING.
WAR IS INEVITABLE.
ANY WAR WITH VALADAR WILL BE FILLED WITH BLOODSHED, MY KING.
HMMM... AND WHAT OF THE RED MOON?
I HEARD THE SERVANTS GOSSIPING UNDER THEIR BREATHS.
MANY CONSIDER IT A BAD OMEN FOR VALDERIA.

COULD IT BE CONNECTED TO VALADAR'S RETURN?
THAT TRAITOR HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH THIS, ADASTRIL!
QUEEN ADASTRIL MIGHT NOT BE ENTIRELY WRONG, YOUR GRACE.
VALADAR TARGETING VAELA IS CONNECTED SOMEHOW.
AND IGNORING THESE DIVINATIONS WOULD NOT JUST BE FOOLHARDY...
...IT COULD SPELL DISASTER.
EVEN MORE OF A REASON FOR THE BATTLECATS TO COMPLETE THEIR QUEST...

La marque, now.
"...THE SECRET OF THE DIRE BEAST MUST NEVER COME TO LIGHT."
UP THERE?
I CAN HEAR HIM.
THE LAST ONE TO GET TO THE TOP IS A WET BOAR'S ASS!
NOT IT!
THAT'S CHEATING!


YOU CHEATED, VAELA.
YOU'LL GET OVER IT.
I GOT YOU, BIG GUY.
-›OOF‹-
THANK TEGEI.
READY, BATTLECATS?
HEY, WHERE IN BAU'S NAME IS KELTHAN?
I'M NOT SURE. HE CHANGED COURSE ABOUT HALF--

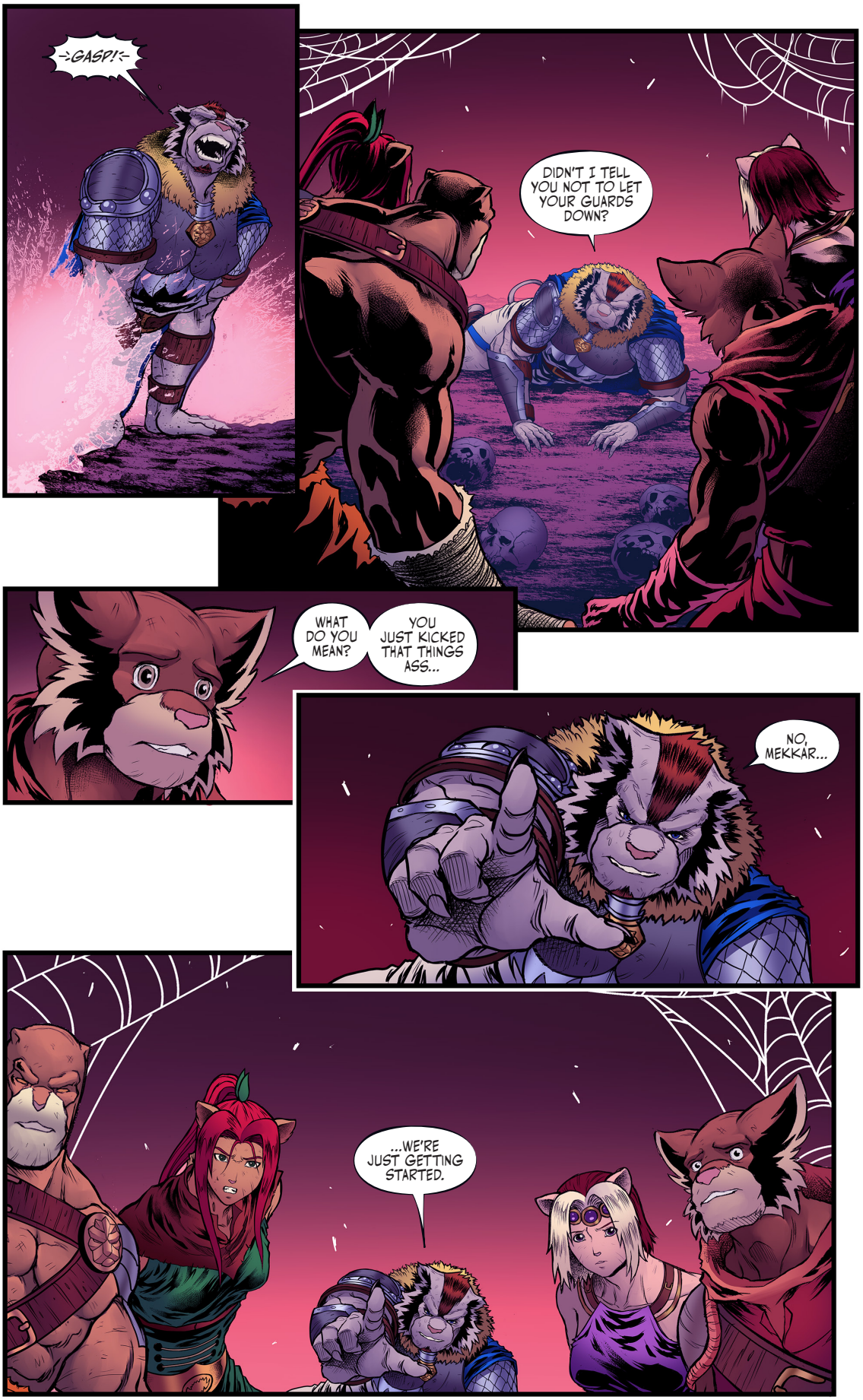
I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS...
I BET THESE GUYS DID, TOO.
HUSH.
THERE'S SOMETHING MOVING IN THERE...
SHE'S RIGHT. I CAN SENSE ITS PRESENCE.
WHAT'S THE PLAN?
WE GO IN SWIFTLY.
DON'T LET YOUR GUARDS DOWN.


WE CLIMBED UP A MOUNTAIN ONLY TO GO DOWN AGAIN?
WHAT MADNESS IS THIS?
MAYBE YOU'RE GETTING OLD, BARD.
HOW DARE YOU?
BLACK-STONIANS CAN HANDLE ANYTHING IN THEIR PRIME.
ARE YOU STILL IN YOUR PRIME?
YOU TELL ME, GREENY.
THIS WAY. WE MUST BE CLOSE.

SWOOSH
WHAT DO YOU SEE?
A LAKE.
THERE MUST BE A BREACH ALLOWING WATER TO FLOW IN.
BY LUNO...
WHAT IS THAT THI--?
MOVE ASIDE!
GHH!
RAAARRGH

KELTHAN!
HE NEEDS OUR HELP.
DON'T EVEN THINK ABOUT IT.
STAND DOWN!
SPLOOOSH

RAWRR
ARGHHH!
SLAAASH
BLOOP
BLOOP
BLOOP


-:GASP!:-
DIDN'T I TELL YOU NOT TO LET YOUR GUARDS DOWN?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?
YOU JUST KICKED THAT THINGS ASS...
NO, MEKKAR...
...WE'RE JUST GETTING STARTED.

GRRR...

THE DIRE BEAST

4

Chapter Four

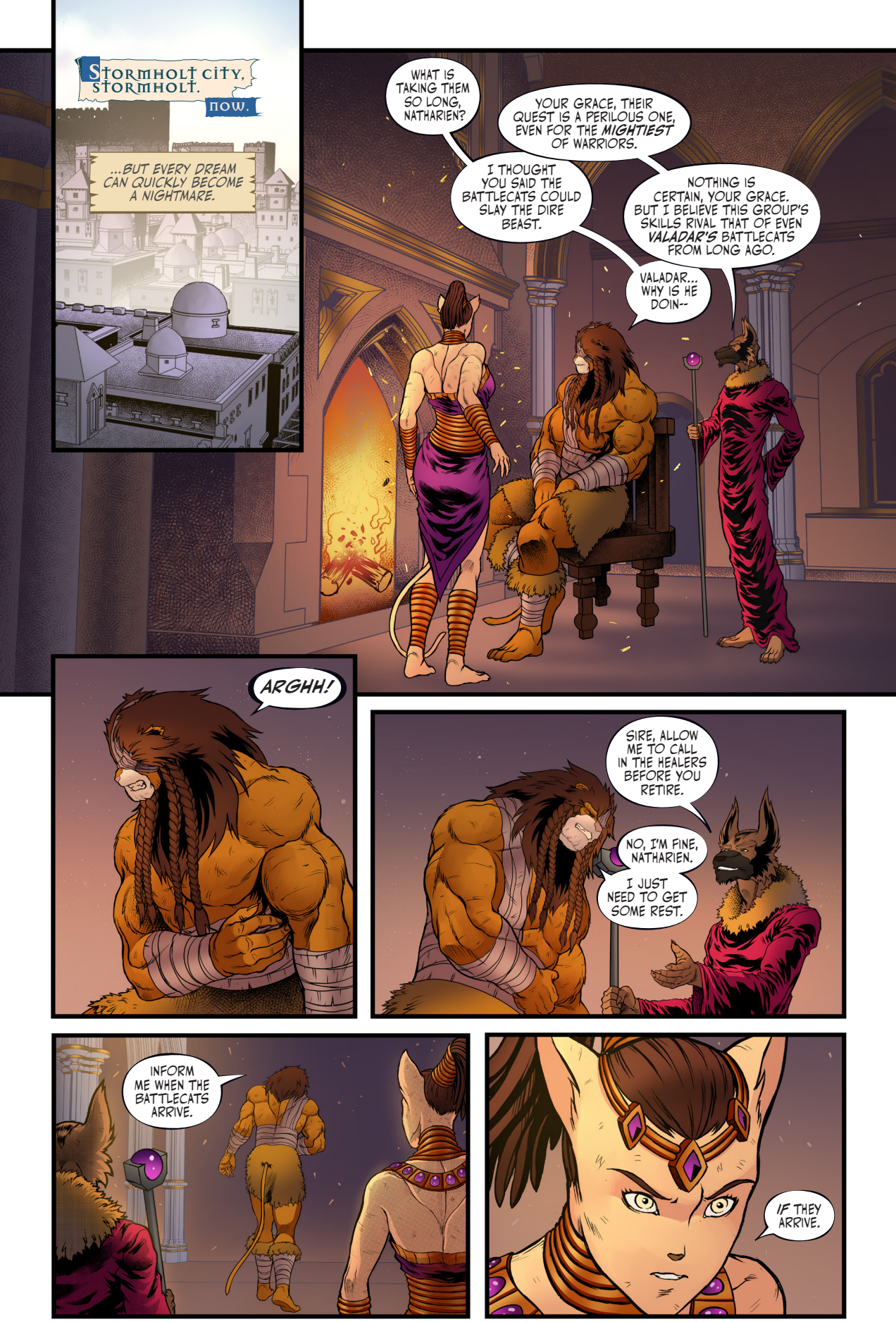
Fanghelm, the Pridelands.
379 C.Y.
The years passed, and after many nocts, a new leader was appointed by divine right, blessing Valderia with his birth.
From an early age, Eramad III showed interest in the art of battle.
As a young feline, he spent his days observing the techniques of soldiers.
Eventually, he grew tired of watching and decided to experience a worthy challenge for himself.
So, Eramad III traveled west to the White Marsh Islands in order to train as if he were a battlecat.
Eramad III was devoted to protecting the felines of Valderia, even if it meant putting his own life at risk.

399 C.Y.
THE NOBLE KING TESTED HIS OWN LIMITS, LONGING TO BECOME A FEARLESS WARRIOR LIKE THE FIRST ERAMAD.
THE KING IS VERY CAPABLE, NATHARIEN.
HE HAS LEARNED IN A FEW YEARS WHAT IT TAKES OTHERS A LIFETIME TO MASTER.
I SEE IT, TOO. HE CAN BE THE BEST OF THE ERAMADS.
ARGHHHH!
ERAMAD III CONTINUED TO HONE HIS SKILLS...
...AND THE FELINES LOVED HIM FOR IT. ESPECIALLY AFTER WHAT HIS PREDECESSOR DID TO VALDERIA.
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
CLAP
BUT HE NEVER FORGOT HIS TRUE PURPOSE...

ALONG THE WAY, ERAMAD III MADE MANY FRIENDS. SOME WOULD GO ONTO IMPACT HIS LEGACY MORE THAN HE KNEW...
CLANK
NICE TRY, YOUR GRACE, BUT YOU MUST STRIKE FROM THE SHADOWS.
TAKE THE ENEMY WHEN THEY LEAST EXPECT IT AND STRIKE FIRST.
CLASH

NO.
YOU.
DON'T.
IF YOU FIGHT IN THE *LIGHT*, YOU'LL WIN EVERY TIME, VALADAR.
YOUR SKILLS ARE IMPROVING, SIRE.
ALL THANKS TO OUR SPARRING SESSIONS, MY FRIEND.
NOT MANY CAN SAY THEY HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF TRAINING WITH THE *LEADER* OF THE BATTLECATS HIMSELF.
EVEN FEWER HAVE HAD THE PRIVILEGE OF TRAINING A KING.

0 C.Y.
ERAMAD I LAID THE FOUNDATIONS OF A PROSPEROUS NATION WITH THE LION GOD'S MANDATES AS HIS GUIDE.
149 C.Y.
ERAMAD II EMBELLISHED THE KINGDOM WHILE EXPANDING CULTURE AND KNOWLEDGE ACROSS THE LAND.
530 C.Y.
AND ERAMAD III, WHO LIVES BY TRADITION AND A PROPER CREED, NOW SITS ON VALDERIA'S THRONE.
FROM A DROP OF BLOOD, A MERE DREAM BECAME A BEAUTIFUL REALITY. ONE WHERE KINGS AND HEROES FOUGHT BRAVELY TO GIVE THE FELINES THE LIFE THEY DESERVE...


STORMHOLT CITY, STORMHOLT.
NOW.
...BUT EVERY DREAM CAN QUICKLY BECOME A NIGHTMARE.
WHAT IS TAKING THEM SO LONG, NATHARIEN?
YOUR GRACE, THEIR QUEST IS A PERILOUS ONE, EVEN FOR THE MIGHTIEST OF WARRIORS.
I THOUGHT YOU SAID THE BATTLECATS COULD SLAY THE DIRE BEAST.
NOTHING IS CERTAIN, YOUR GRACE. BUT I BELIEVE THIS GROUP'S SKILLS RIVAL THAT OF EVEN VALADAR'S BATTLECATS FROM LONG AGO.
VALADAR... WHY IS HE DOIN--
ARGHH!
SIRE, ALLOW ME TO CALL IN THE HEALERS BEFORE YOU RETIRE.
NO, I'M FINE, NATHARIEN.
I JUST NEED TO GET SOME REST.
INFORM ME WHEN THE BATTLECATS ARRIVE.
IF THEY ARRIVE.

THE DIRE BEAST IS A CREATURE OF LEGEND. THE *TERROR* OF STORMHOLT.
THE BATTLECATS ARE NOTHING BUT COMMON FELINES WITH EXCEPTIONAL TRAINING.
MY QUEEN, THESE TIRED EYES HAVE SEEN THEM ACCOMPLISH MORE THAN ANY IN THE NAME OF THE KING.
COMMON IS NOT A TERM THAT APPLIES TO THEIR *ILK*.
VALADAR'S WORDS HAVE REACHED MANY EARS. HIS REBELLION IS RAPIDLY GAINING SUPPORT.
THEY SAY HE SUPPORTS A HIGHER POWER.
ONE MIGHTIER THAN THE LION GOD...
HERESY!
VALADAR TWISTS THE TRUTH TO SHATTER OUR UNITED STRENGTH.
YOU MUST NOT BELIEVE HIS LIES.
THIS IS *NOT* THE TIME TO WAIVER...

GREENSPYRE.
"...OTHERWISE, HIS FOLLOWERS WILL GROW MORE EMBOLDENED."
HERE WE ARE. THE BORDER BETWEEN THE BLOODCANYONS AND GREENSPYRE.
IT'S GREENER THAN I EXPECTED.
IT MAKES ME NAUSEOUS.
BUT YOU WERE BORN HERE, GHEETA.
PRECISELY.
I MUCH PREFER THAT FEELING OF DOOM IN THE BLOOD CANYONS.
WHAT ABOUT YOU, BIG GUY?
YOU HATE THIS PLACE, TOO? WANNA DESTROY IT ALL, RIGHT?
Y-Y-YES.

SO, WHERE DO WE START?
WE NEED TO SPLIT UP.
BIRCH, YOU'LL GO TO THE SCOUT'S SIGHT.
JARNOCH, IT'S UP TO YOU TO NEUTRALIZE THE HOUSE OF VIGILANCE.
AND I'LL TAKE THE OVERSEER'S POINT.
LET'S SHOW VALDERIA HOW WEAK ERAMAD HAS MADE THEM.
IN THREE DAYS, THEIR STORY ENDS...

"...AND OURS BEGINS."
ARGHH
HEY, UGLY!
ARGGHHH!!
OUCH
OOOF
AHHH
OUCH
AHHH

STRIKE WITH ALL YOUR MIGHT, BATTLECATS!
SHADOW!
ROAAAR
COME ON!
HOLD ON, ZORIEN!
THIS WILL SLOW IT DOWN!!
CLUNK
-:NGHH:-
CRACK
ARRRRGHH!

THOOOM
WOOOOSH
SLAAAASH
MISS ME?
SMACK
ARGH. I'LL TAKE THAT AS A "YES."
CRUNCH

EVEN IF I FALL, YOU DIE TODAY, BEAST.
MAY THE LION GOD HAVE MERCY ON YOU--
SWISHHHHHHHH

CLINK
CLINK
CLINK
CLINK
THUD

GRRRR
CLANK!
WE'RE NOT DONE YET.
ON YOUR FEET, BATTLECATS!

OUR ATTACKS HAVEN'T HAD ANY EFFECT.
SHE'S NOT WRONG.
KELTHAN, WE CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS.
AGREED.
ZORIEN, WE NEED A DISTRACTION...
FOR THE KING!

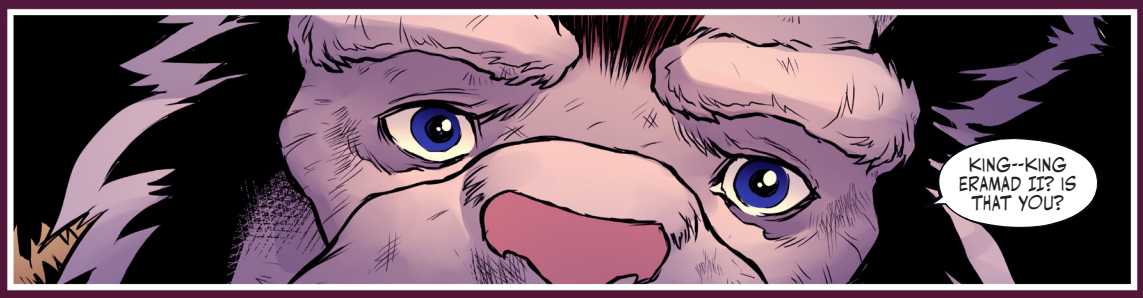
KRAK
STEADY... STEADY... RELEASE!
THUK
ARGH
READY FOR ONE LAST DANCE?
COME ON, DON'T BE--
RAWR
AHHHHHH!
ROAR

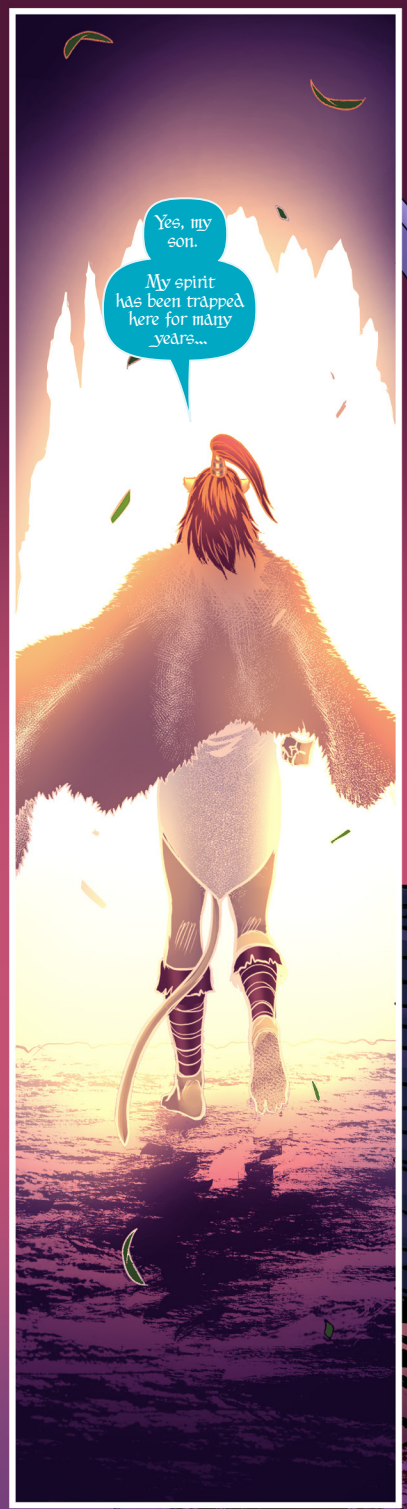
WOOOSH
THE BEAST IS ACCUSTOMED TO THIS PAIN, WHICH GIVES IT THE ADVANTAGE.
BUT IT DOESN'T KNOW THAT WE WERE TRAINED BY THE BEST.
SHINK
SHINK
WE MIGHT HAVE HAD OUR BACKS AGAINST THE WALL...
SWOOSH
...BUT WE ARE BATTLECATS. AND BATTLECATS ARE ALWAYS PREPARED.
CLUNK!

I CAN'T LET IT GET REGAIN ITS BALANCE.
COME ON, KELTHAN, YOU DEFEATED THE NOCT MAIDEN.
IT'S FAST. SMART...
...BUT IT BLEEDS.
IT'S RESPONSIBLE FOR SO MUCH DEATH.
WILL IT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR OURS AS WELL?

NO, THIS BEAST'S REIGN OF TERROR MUST END.
IT'S STRENGTH IS NOT NORMAL...
THERE IS MORE TO THIS BEAST THAN WE KNOW.
WHAT IS OUR KING NOT TELLING US?
SLASH
AIEEEEOU

IT DOESN'T MATTER. I HAVE MY ORDERS.
WAIT...THIS CREATURE'S EYES. THERE'S MORE TO THEM.
NO... IT CAN'T BE...

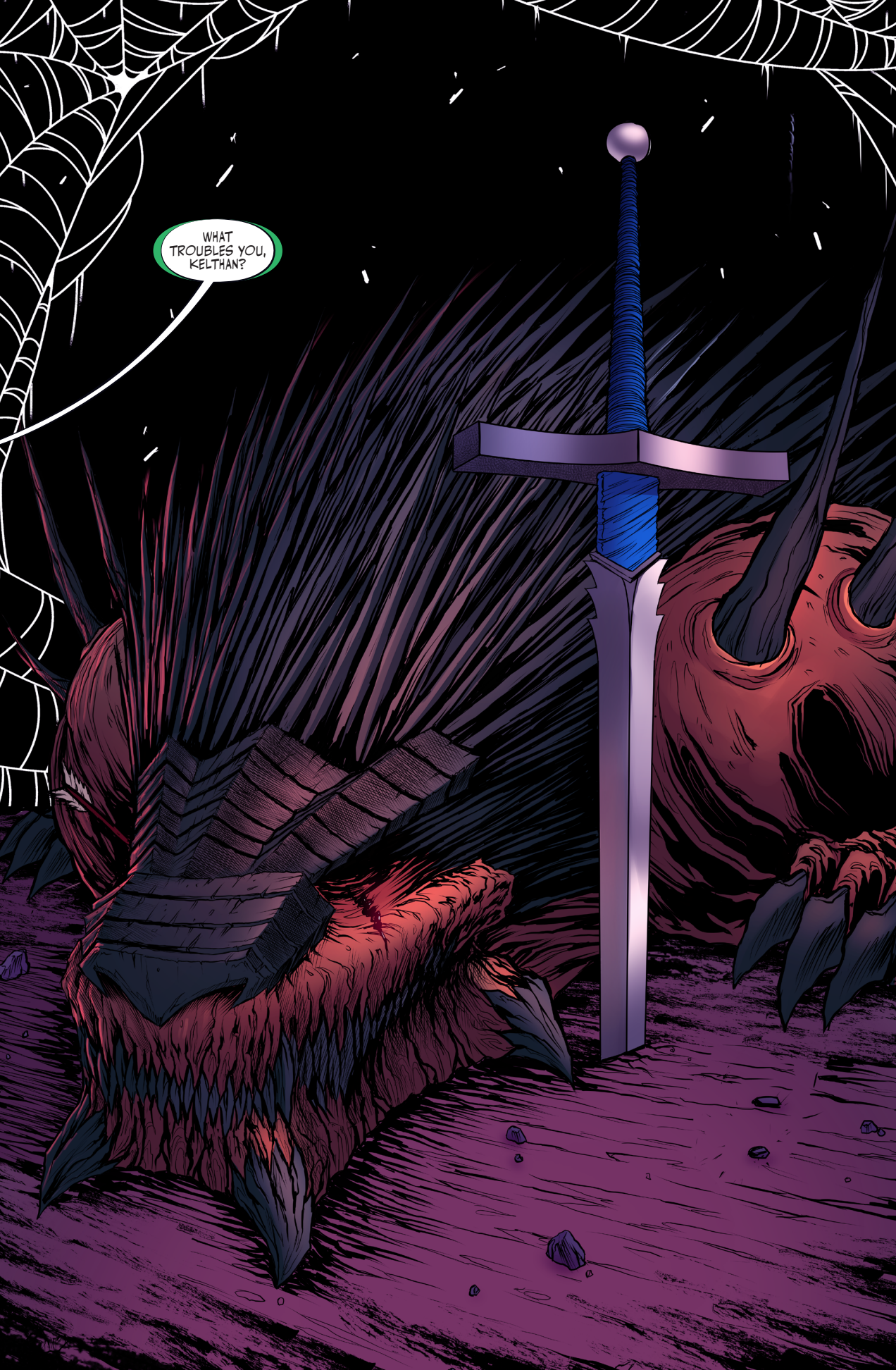

KING--KING ERAMAD II? IS THAT YOU?


Yes, my son.
My spirit has been trapped here for many years...

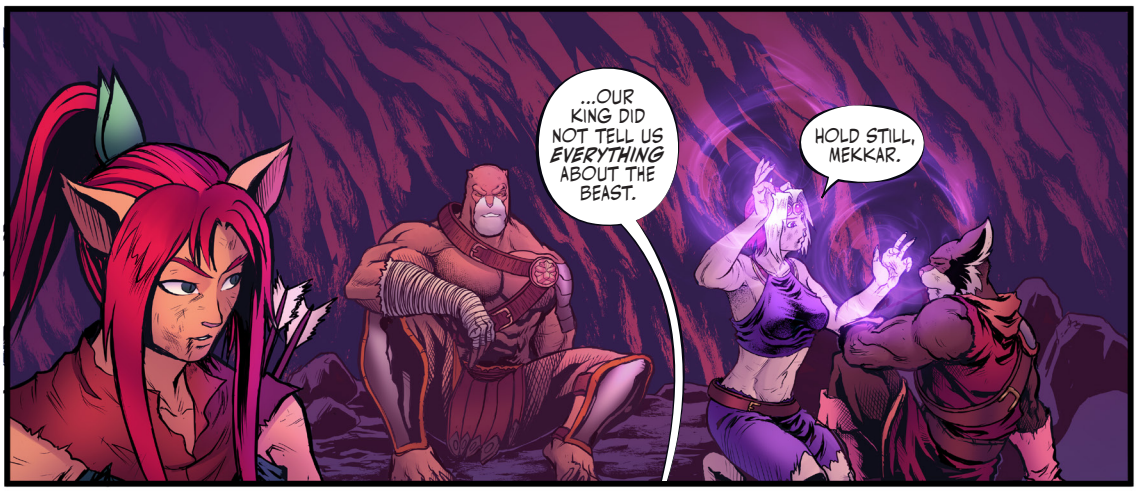
Thank you for freeing me from this prison.
Now I can finally take my place among the stars and rest in the glory of the Lion God.
Goodbye, Kelthan.
GOODBYE, YOUR GRACE...

FOR THE KING

Chapter Five


WHAT TROUBLES YOU, KELTHAN?

IT'S AS I SUSPECTED...


...OUR KING DID NOT TELL US *EVERYTHING* ABOUT THE BEAST.
HOLD STILL, MEKKAR.

KELTHAN, I HAVE A BAD FEELING ABOUT THIS. WHAT'S GOING ON?

QUICKLY GATHER SOME VINES.

VINES?

twenty minutes later...
OKAY. THESE ARE ALL THE VINES WE COULD FIND.
WHAT NOW?
RESTRAIN THE BEAST. WE'RE TAKING HIM WITH US TO STORMHOLT CITY.
I'M SORRY. MY EARS MUST BE DIRTY...
YOU HEARD HIM RIGHT.
BUT OUR ORDERS WERE TO SLAY THE BEAST.
WHAT AREN'T YOU TELLING US?
THIS BEAST IS NOT WHAT IT SEEMS.
KELTHAN, THE KING DIDN'T SEND US HERE TO MAKE ROPE.
THIS ISN'T UP FOR DEBATE, MEKKAR.
FINE. FINE. BLACKSTONIANS MAKE THE FINEST ROPE ANYWAYS.

DAMN ROPE... I'M A BATTLECAT... NOT SOME DAMN ROPEMAKER...
VAELA, CAN YOU USE SHADOW TO LIFT THE BEAST FROM THE GROUND?
YES, I WOULD JUST HAVE TO STOP AND REST A LITTLE MORE OFTEN.
THIS IS TREASONOUS, KELTHAN.
I'M SURE THERE IS A GOOD REASON FOR THIS...
TELL ME, FELINES...
...IS THIS REASON ENOUGH?
WHOA!
IT CAN'T BE...
I... I--
HOW IS THIS POSSIBLE?

STORMHOLT CITY.
DAYS LATER...
I HAVE TO SAY, THIS IS NOT THE WAY I EXPECTED FOR US TO BE MAKING OUR RETURN.
BELIEVE ME, MEKKAR, NEITHER DID I.
WE'VE MADE IT THIS FAR, BUT THIS QUEST ISN'T OVER YET.
WHAT DO WE TELL THE GUARDS?
THEY'LL BE SUSPICIOUS OF WHATEVER THE HELL IT IS THAT WE'RE DRAGGING.
DON'T WORRY. I'LL DO THE TALKING.
FINALLY! THE BATTLECATS ARE HERE!
WOW! WILL THE KING BE HAPPY TO SEE YOU! HEY WHAT'S THAT YOU'RE--
GUARDS, PLEASE KEEP IT DOWN, AND DO NOT ANNOUNCE OUR ARRIVAL.
HUH?
YOU HEARD ME. ALERT ONLY THE ORACLE WHISPERER HIMSELF.
THIS MATTER CONCERNS MEMBERS OF THE COURT ALONE.
OF COURSE, KELTHAN OF STORMHOLT.
FOR THE KING.
YES, FOR THE KING.
I HOPE YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING...
MAY THE LION GOD HAVE MERCY ON US ALL.

SIRE. I'VE JUST BEEN INFORMED THAT THE BATTLECATS HAVE ARRIVED.
WHAT ABOUT VAELA?
SHE IS SAFE, MY KING.

THANK THE STARS SHE IS SAFE AND OUR KINGDOM IS SECURED.
COME. AID ME TO THE BALCONY. I WISH TO WELCOME THEM HO--

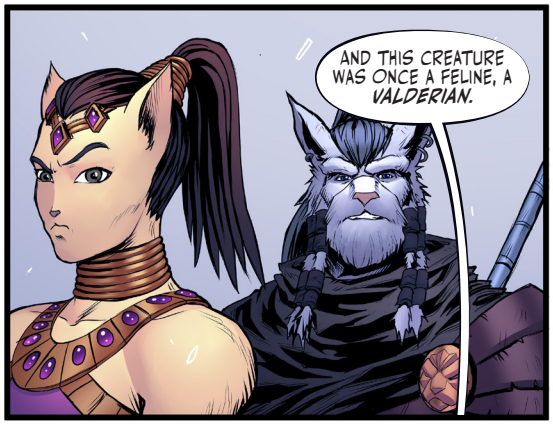
WHAT IS THAT THEY'RE *DRAGGING* BEHIND THEM?
SIRE?

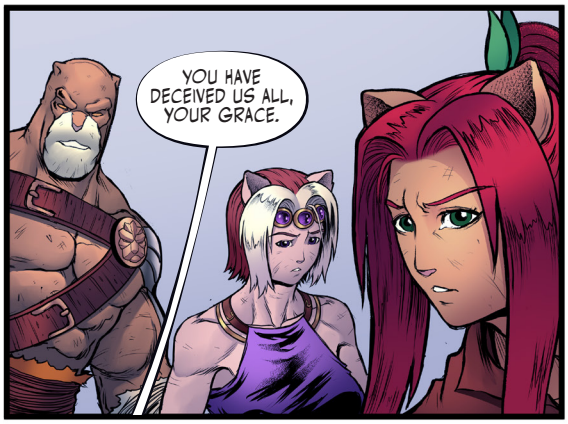
CALL THE ROYAL GUARD...

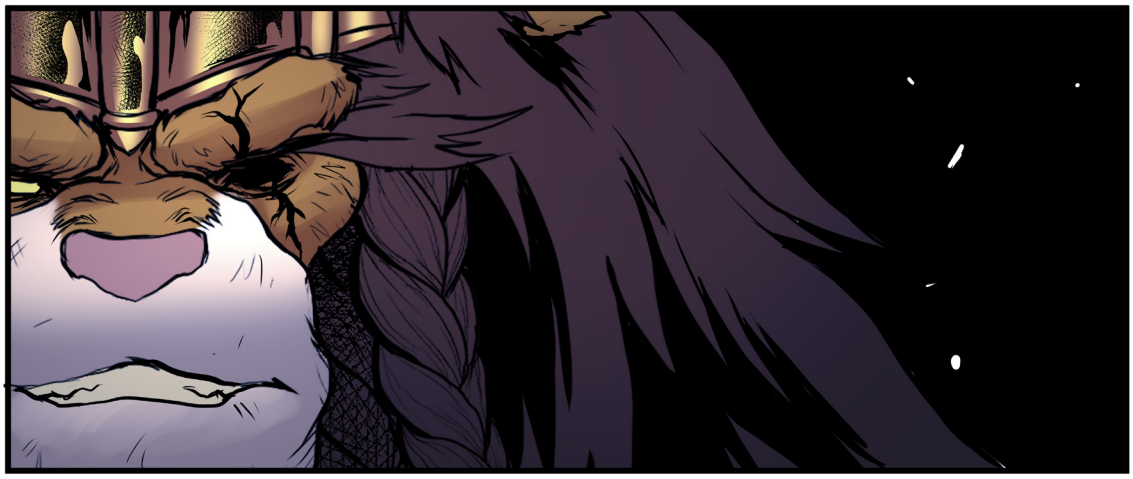
WHAT'S TAKING THE KING SO LONG?
HE'S PROBABLY TAKING A--
WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?!
YOUR GRACE.
WAIT.
WE CAN EXPLAIN!
STAND ASIDE, VAELA.
TELL ME, KELTHAN.
WHY HAVE YOU DISOBEYED YOUR KING?
SIRE. THERE IS NO DISRESPECT IN MY ACTIONS.
AND YOU HAVE MY SINCEREST APOLOGIES...
BUT, THERE IS A REASON BEHIND MY ACTIONS.

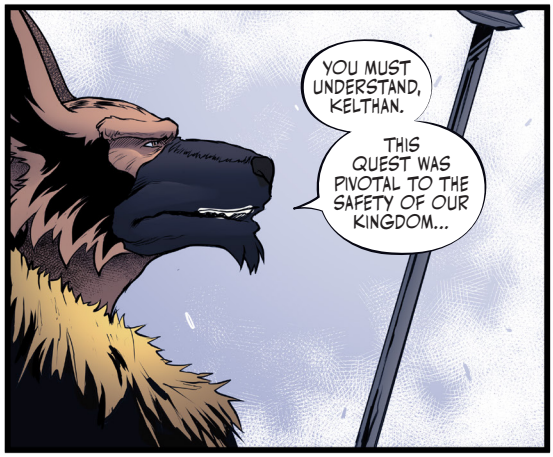
I ORDERED YOU TO *SLAY* THIS MONSTROSITY.
NOT INVITE IT HOME FOR SUPPER.

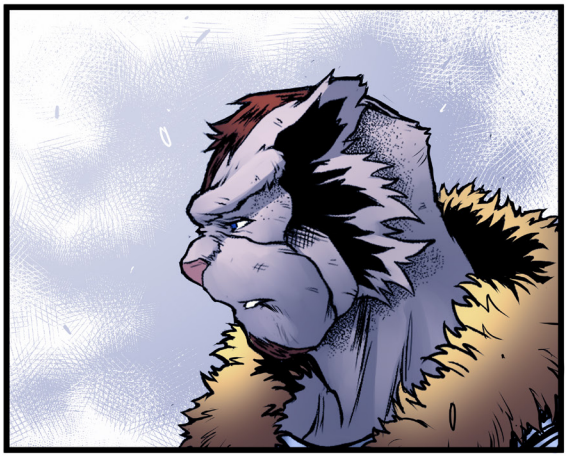
THE BATTLECATS ARE SWORN TO PROTECT THE MANDATES OF THE LION GOD, THE CROWN, AND THE FELINES OF VALDERIA, SIRE.


AND THIS CREATURE WAS ONCE A FELINE, A *VALDERIAN.*


YOU HAVE DECEIVED US ALL, YOUR GRACE.




YOU MUST UNDERSTAND, KELTHAN.
THIS QUEST WAS PIVOTAL TO THE SAFETY OF OUR KINGDOM...

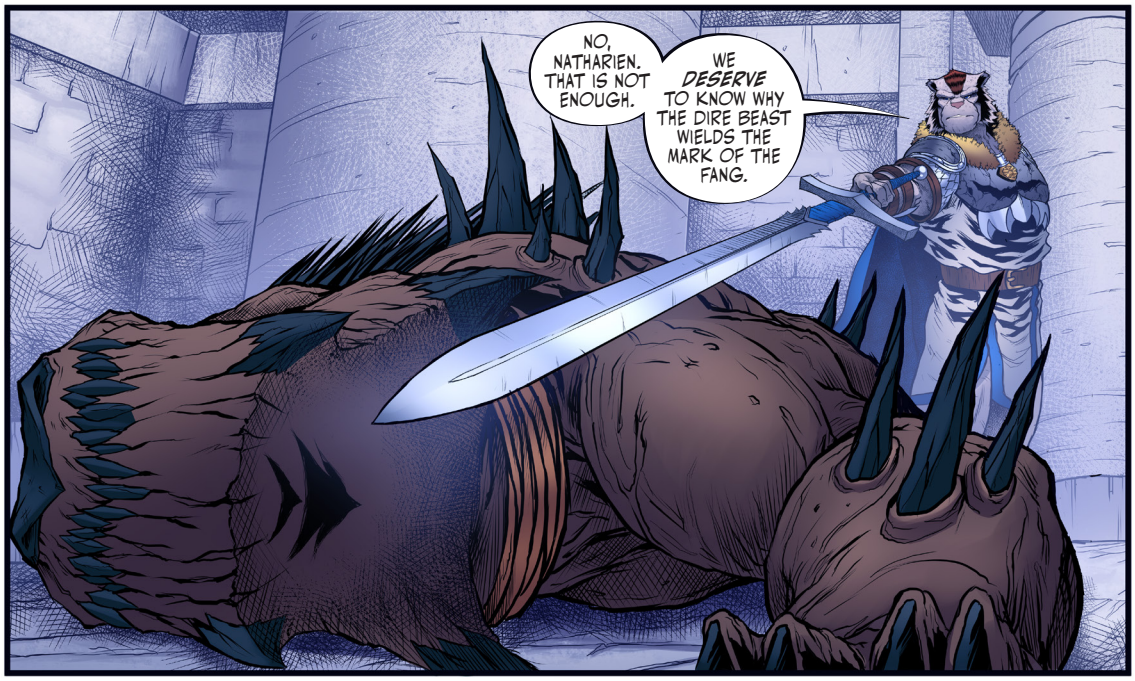


The Scout's Sight, Greenspyre.
"...because our enemies are going stronger by the day."
In the name of King Eramad III, state your business!
Perhaps he is hard of hearing?
Don't have to be able to hear to know when you're in danger.
He's pathetic.
Bring him inside.
Let's see what the other soldiers make of him...

WHAT DO WE HAVE HERE? A BLACKSTONIAN?
STATE YOUR NAME, OAF.
THIS SHOULD BE FUN.
STATE YOUR NAME!
B--
B--
B--
B-B-B-- SPEAK UP!
B--
BIRCH.
WHY ARE YOU HERE, BIRCH?!
WHAT DOES A DULLARD LIKE YOU WANT?!
V--
V--
V...

...VALDERIA!

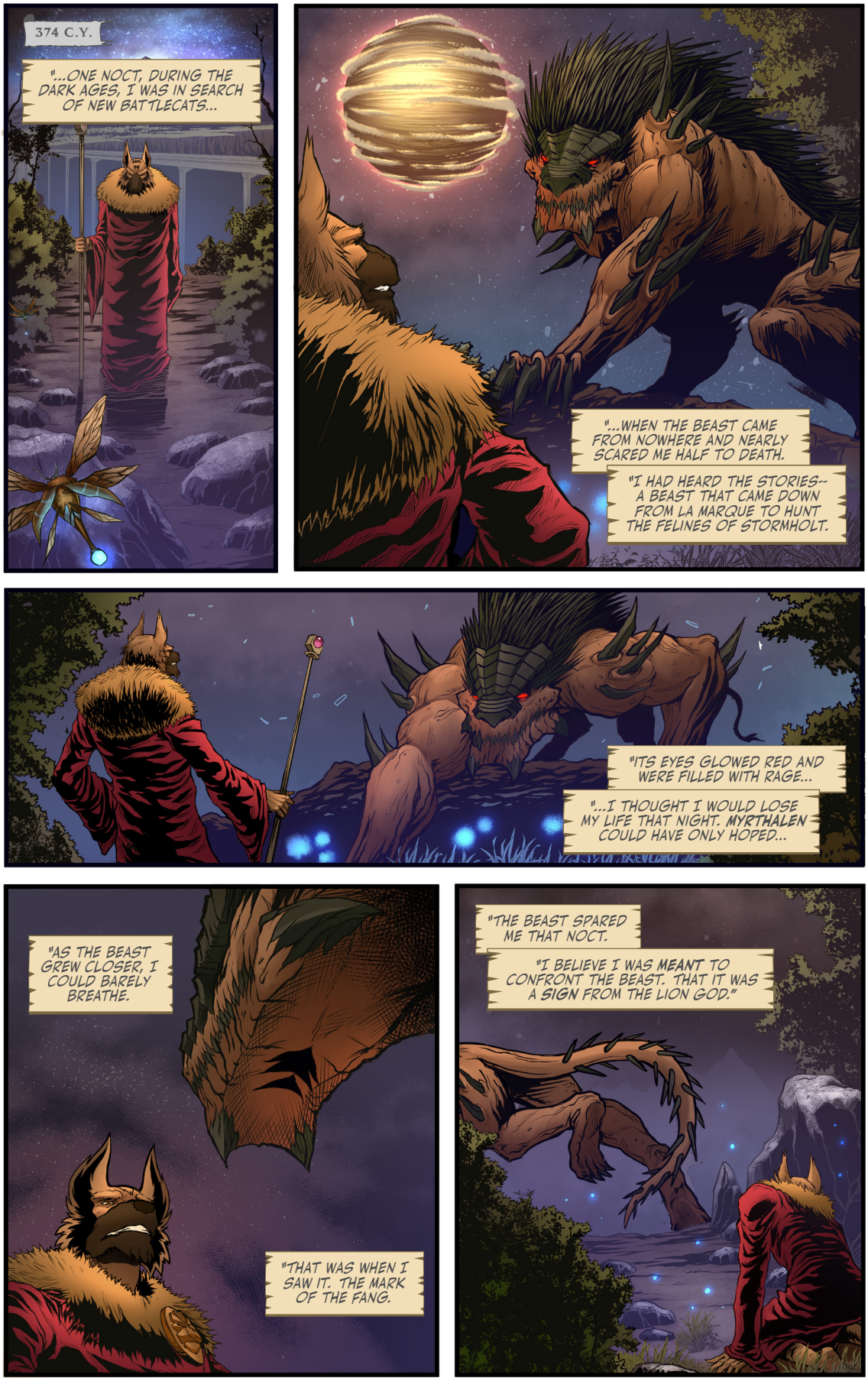
BAM
RARGH!
BOOM
SLASH
GET OUT OF HERE!
HRGH?
RUN FOR YOUR LIVES!
NO, NO-- PLEASE!
SPLAT
ARGH!


NO, NATHARIEN. THAT IS NOT ENOUGH.
WE *DESERVE* TO KNOW WHY THE DIRE BEAST WIELDS THE MARK OF THE FANG.

BEFORE I STRUCK A KILLING BLOW ON THE BEAST, I WAS GRACED BY THE *SPIRIT* OF KING ERAMAD II.
THAT IS NO COINCIDENCE...

SIRE?
TELL THEM, NATHARIEN.

AS YOU WISH.
THE TRUTH IS THAT THIS CREATURE IS NO FELINE.
IT CEASED TO BE MANY YEARS AGO...


374 C.Y.
"...ONE NOCT, DURING THE DARK AGES, I WAS IN SEARCH OF NEW BATTLECATS...
"...WHEN THE BEAST CAME FROM NOWHERE AND NEARLY SCARED ME HALF TO DEATH.
"I HAD HEARD THE STORIES-- A BEAST THAT CAME DOWN FROM LA MARQUE TO HUNT THE FELINES OF STORMHOLT.
"ITS EYES GLOWED RED AND WERE FILLED WITH RAGE...
"...I THOUGHT I WOULD LOSE MY LIFE THAT NIGHT. MYRTHALEN COULD HAVE ONLY HOPED...
"AS THE BEAST GREW CLOSER, I COULD BARELY BREATHE.
"THAT WAS WHEN I SAW IT. THE MARK OF THE FANG.
"THE BEAST SPARED ME THAT NOCT.
"I BELIEVE I WAS MEANT TO CONFRONT THE BEAST. THAT IT WAS A SIGN FROM THE LION GOD."

VALADAR IS AFTER VAELA BECAUSE OF THE MARK SHE POSSESSES.
WE KNEW THAT, WITH MYRTHALEN BY HIS SIDE, IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE VALADAR DISCOVERED THE BEAST POSSESSED THE MARK AS WELL.
NATHARIEN, THAT STILL DOESN'T EXPLAIN *WHY* THE BEAST BEARS THE MARK.
YOU'RE RIGHT, KELTHAN.
IT WAS NO COINCIDENCE THAT YOU SAW THE SPIRIT OF ERAMAD II...
FORGIVE ME, YOUR GRACE.
...BECAUSE THE DIRE BEAST *IS* THE EXILED KING...
...ERAMAD II.

THE HOUSE OF VIGILANCE, GREENSPYRE.
FELINES! ENJOY THESE LAST NOCTS OF MIDDERNSUN!
RAISE YOUR HANDS IN GLORY!
BE PROUD TO SERVE THE GREAT REGION OF GREENSPYRE!
AND BE PROUD TO SERVE THE GREATEST KING VALDERIA HAS EVER KNOWN!
FOR THE--
WHAM
LOOKS LIKE RORINHAL CAME EARLY.
FOOLISH FELINES! YOU'VE SWALLOWED THE LIES OF A FOOL FOR TOO LONG.
GET HIM!
KILL THE BLASPHEMER!
SLAUGHTER THE INTRUDER!
I SEE THAT YOU'RE ALL EAGER TO MEET YOUR DEATHS...

GAK
GAK
GAK
GAK
GAK
GAK
GAK
GAK
GAK
...ALLOW ME TO HELP.
CLNCH
CRACK
HMPH.
SUCH A PITY.
I WAS EXPECTING MORE OF A FIGHT...

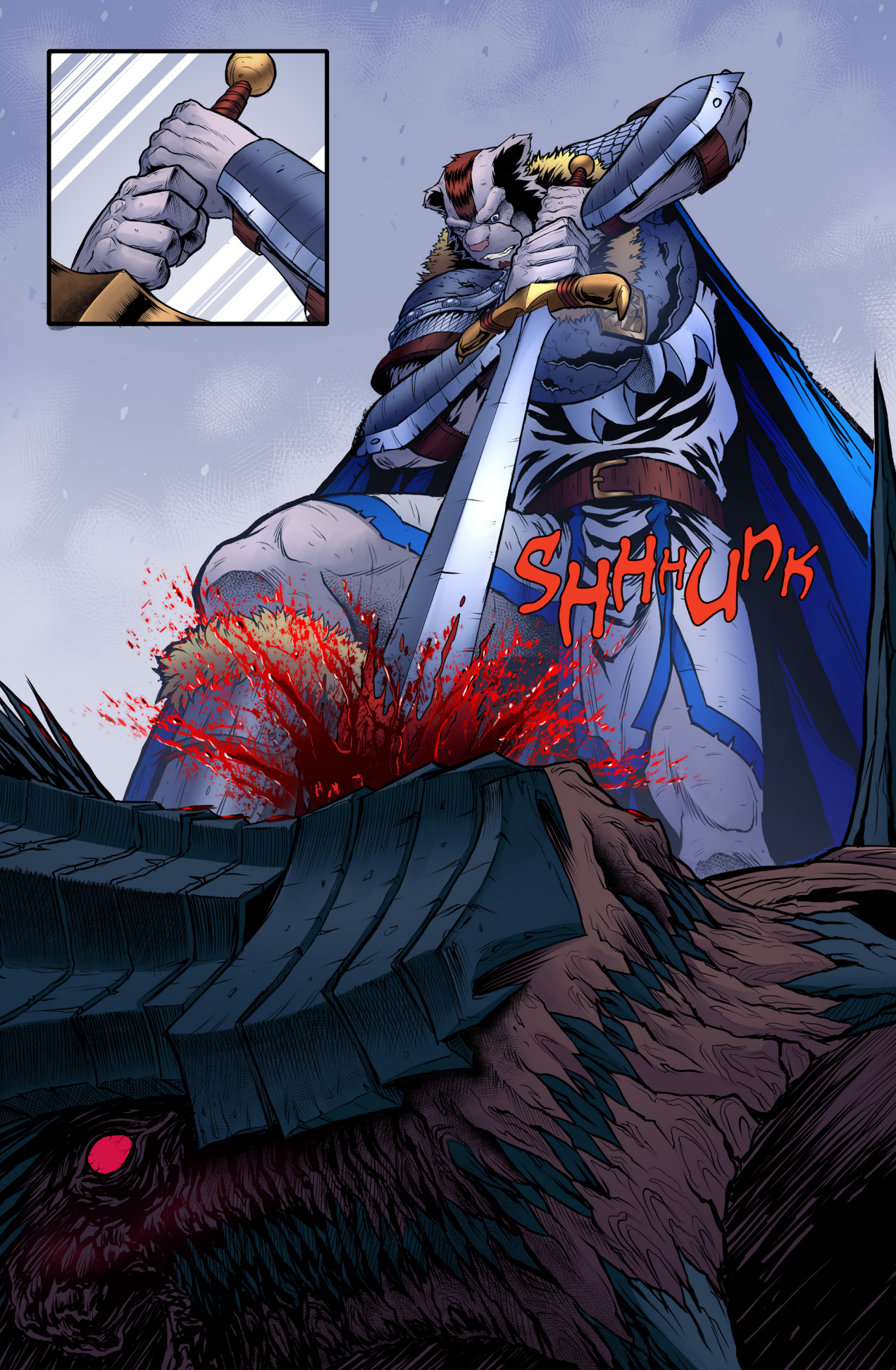
THIS POOR CREATURE.
IT DESERVES MORE THAN TO BE SLAUGHTERED AND FORGOTTEN.
A KING SHOULD NOT BE REMEMBERED LIKE THIS.
THAT IS NOT YOUR KING! AND THIS CHANGES NOTHING!
YOU'VE BROUGHT SHAME ON THE CROWN. SHAME ON VALDERIA.
THE ONLY WAY TO CHANGE THAT IS TO DO WHAT MUST BE DONE...
...AND SLAY THIS BEAST.

KELTHAN, IF YOU DON'T DO THIS, YOU GIVE REASON FOR VALDERIANS TO *DOUBT* THE CROWN.
AND IF VALADAR WERE TO CAPTURE THE BEAST, IT WOULD TIP THE SCALES IN HIS REBELLION'S FAVOR.
BUT THERE IS NO JUSTICE IN THIS.
YOUR HONOR WILL HEAL IN TIME. AN UGLY MEMORY, BUT VALDERIA WILL ENDURE.
ENOUGH! WHERE DO YOUR *LOYALTIES* LIE, KELTHAN OF STORMHOLT?
SLAY THE BEAST AND LET US BE DONE WITH THIS!

Laurelville, Greenspyre.
IS EVERYTHING IN ORDER?
YES, CAPTAIN. EVERYTHING IS IN ORDER.
GOOD. STAY VIGILANT.
YES, CAPTAIN. VIGILANT AS ALW--
-:GAAK:-
WOOSH
HA! HE FELL FUNNY.

SWISH
SWISH
SWISH
SNATCH
THACK
I MEAN, REALLY. YOU GUYS DIDN'T SEE THAT COMING?
:ACK:
SWISH
:GAK:
SWISH
SWISH
:ARGH:

WHAT'S OUR MOVE HERE, KELTHAN?
KEEP YOUR BLADES AWAY FROM ME!
KELTHAN!
SNAP OUT OF IT!
I DON'T THINK THE BATTLECATS HAVE MUCH OF A CHOICE HERE.
TAKE MY BLADE, KELTHAN. LET IT BE A REMINDER OF WHOM YOU SERVE...
AS YOU WISH, MY KING.

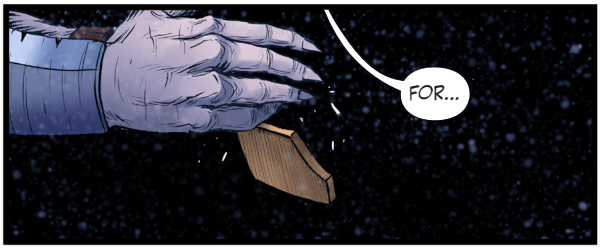

SHHHUNK

GOOD.
GUARDS!
ARREST THE BATTLECATS AND TAKE THEM TO THE DUNGEONS...

SIRE, WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
...AND NO ONE SHALL EVER SPEAK OF THIS UNDER PENALTY OF EXILE.
AM I UNDERSTOOD?

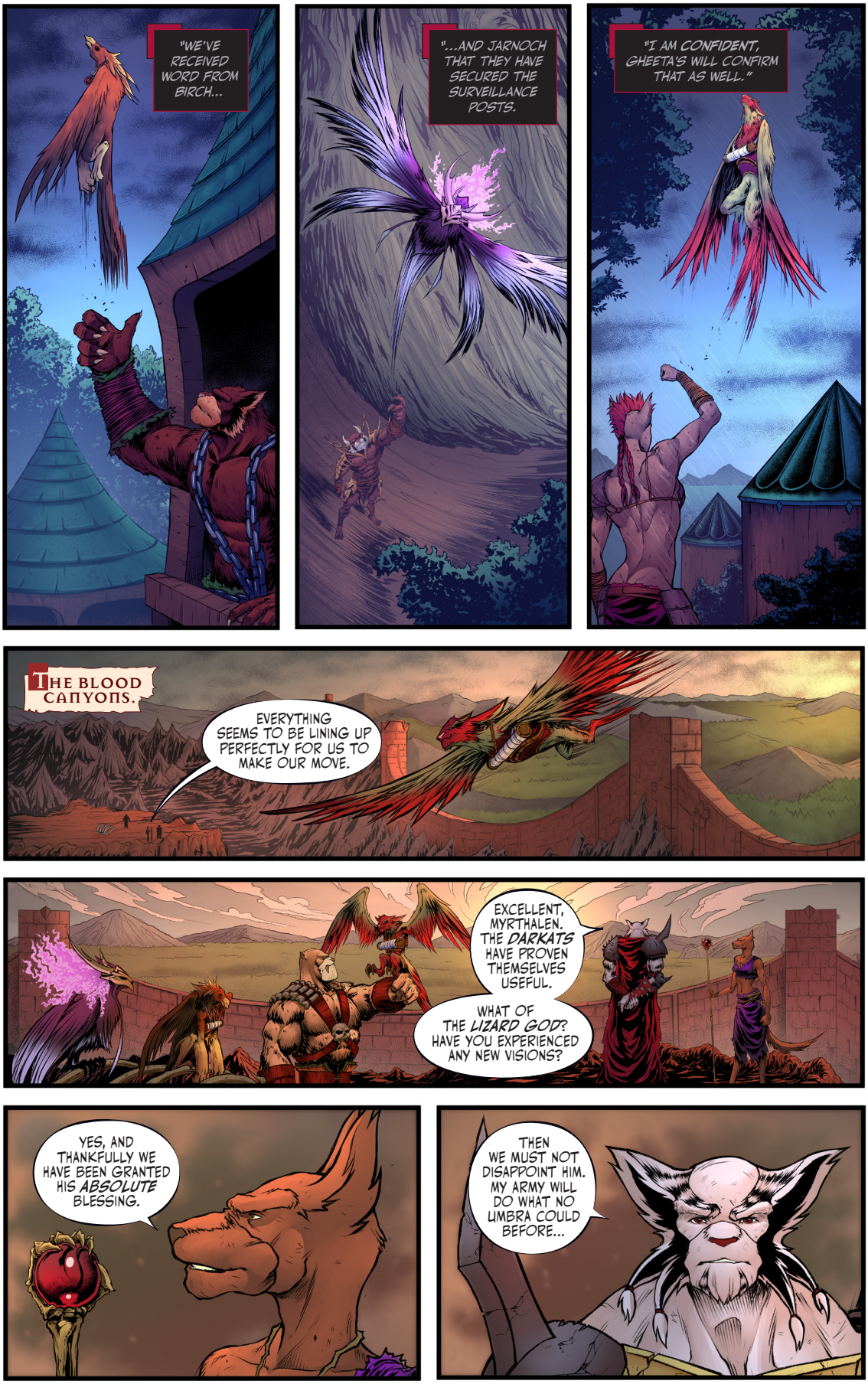
BUT WAIT! WE CAN EXPLAIN!
THESE GUYS AREN'T SO TOUGH. KELTHAN, JUST GIVE ME THE WORD!

NO, MEKKAR. THE KING HAS SPOKEN AND WE SERVE THE CROWN.
OUR LIVES ARE IN HIS HANDS NOW...


FOR...

...THE...

...KING.


"WE'VE RECEIVED WORD FROM BIRCH...
"...AND JARNOCH THAT THEY HAVE SECURED THE SURVEILLANCE POSTS.
"I AM CONFIDENT, GHEETA'S WILL CONFIRM THAT AS WELL."
THE BLOOD CANYONS.
EVERYTHING SEEMS TO BE LINING UP PERFECTLY FOR US TO MAKE OUR MOVE.
EXCELLENT, MYRTHALEN. THE DARKATS HAVE PROVEN THEMSELVES USEFUL.
WHAT OF THE LIZARD GOD? HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED ANY NEW VISIONS?
YES, AND THANKFULLY WE HAVE BEEN GRANTED HIS ABSOLUTE BLESSING.
THEN WE MUST NOT DISAPPOINT HIM. MY ARMY WILL DO WHAT NO UMBRA COULD BEFORE...

...WE WILL EXPOSE THE LIES OF THE ERAMAD DYNASTY AND THE LION GOD'S MANDATES.
TOGETHER WE WILL SEIZE THE THRONE AND BRING A NEW DAWN ACROSS VALDERIA!
TO BE CONTINUED...

COVER GALLERY

ARTIST: JESSE LONERGAN
BATTLECATS LEGACY 1 - COVER B

ARTIST: JESSE LONERGAN
BATTLECATS LEGACY 2 - COVER B

ARTIST: JESSE LONERGAN
BATTLECATS LEGACY 3 - COVER B

ARTIST: JESSE LONERGAN
BATTLECATS LEGACY 4 - COVER B

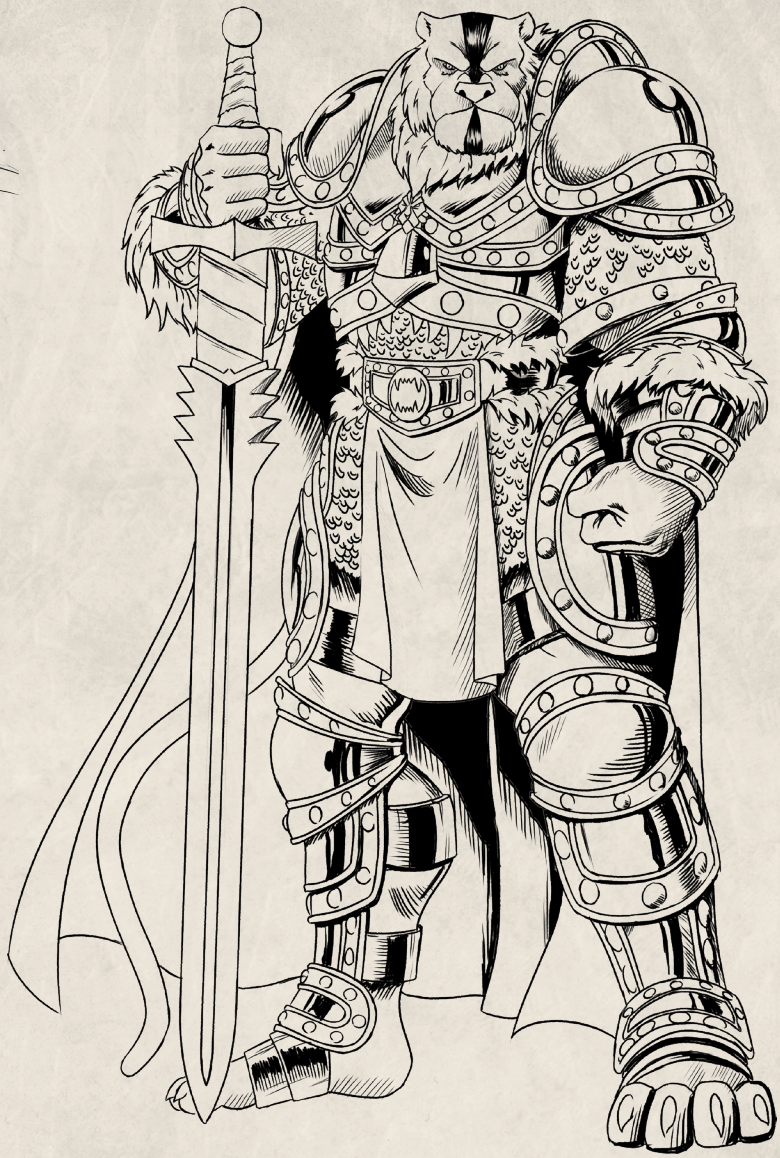
ARTIST: JESSE LONERGAN
BATTLECATS LEGACY 5 - COVER B

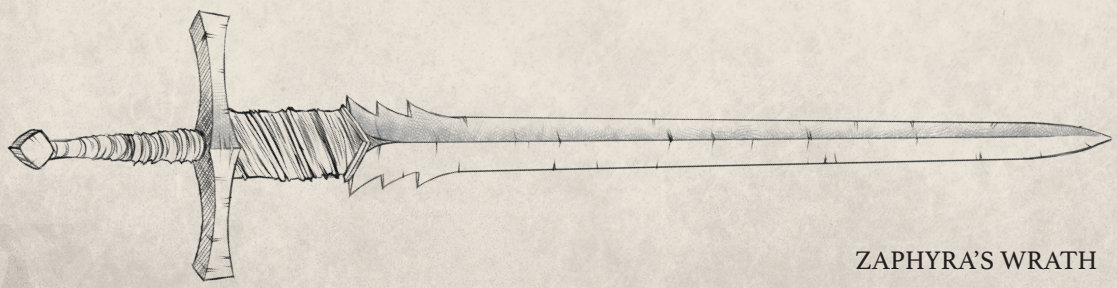
ARTIST: DAN PANOSIAN
BATTLECATS LEGACY 1 -COVER ECCC 2022

VALD

E R I A

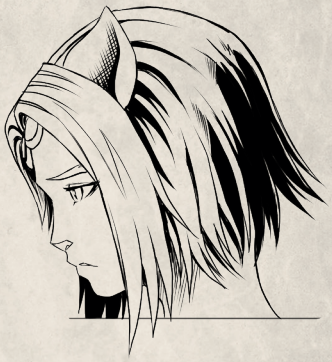
KELTHAN



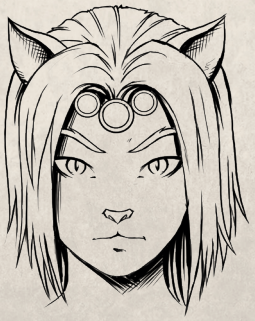


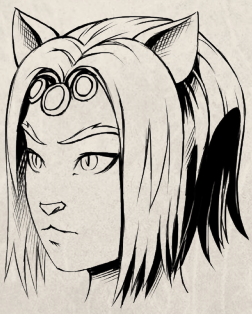
ZAPHYRA'S WRATH

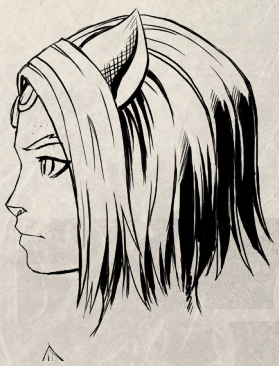
VAELA



MARK OF THE FANG







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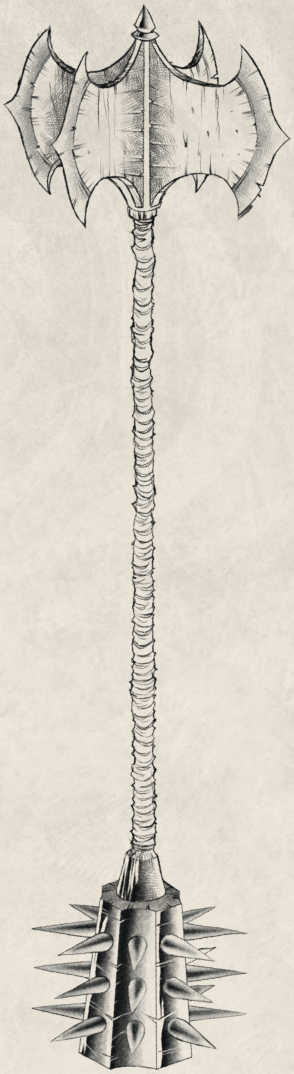
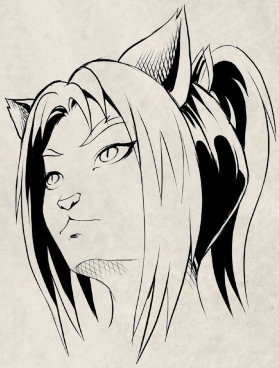
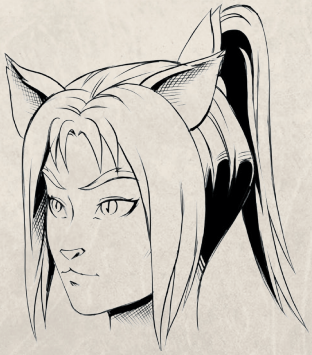
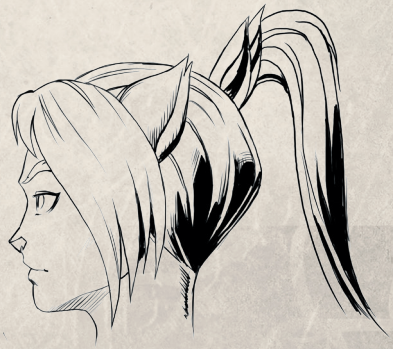


SKELETON'S BANE

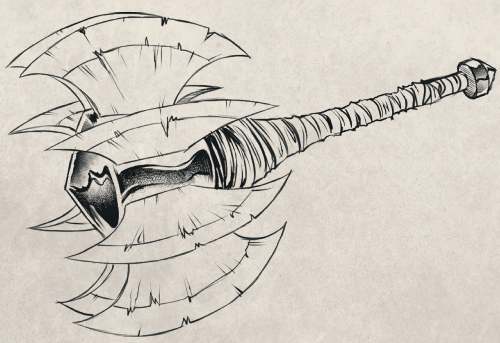
KALEERA



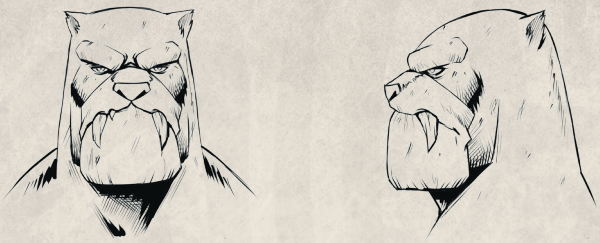




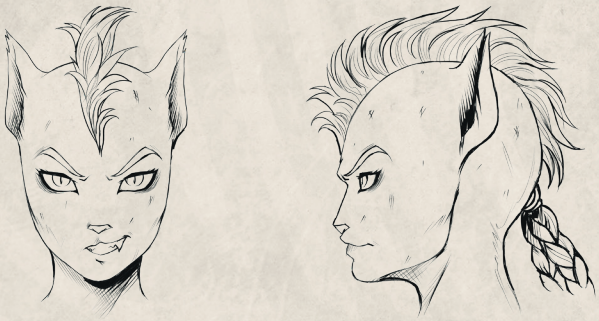
MEKKAR



THE DARKATS



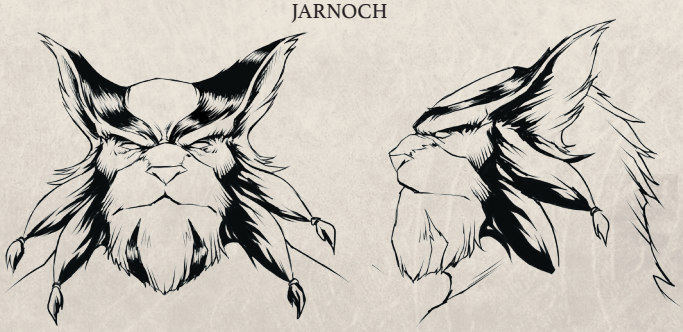
ELTOREQ



GHEETA

BIRCH

JARNOCH



VALADAR

Battlecats Vol 1: Hunt for the Dire Beast.

A growing evil threatens the land of Valderia and the Eramad Dynasty that leads it. At the King's request, the Battlecats, sworn protectors of the crown, are tasked with pursuing and eliminating the Dire Beast--a creature stalking and terrorizing the region of Stormholt. While the hunt may seem straightforward, the felines of Valderia quickly find themselves in a battle with stakes that affect their entire world. With each step of their journey, they unearth darker foes and even darker secrets.

Battlecats is a medieval fantasy series from Mark London that blends action, fantasy, and political intrigue. **Collects issues #1 – 5.**

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